



SGSITS MUN 25 SOCHUM

Deliberating upon the Culturally Rooted Conflict in
Myanmar and Reviving the Ethnic Rohingya Minority

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Letter from the Bureau

Namaste Delegates,

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you all to the SGSITS Model United Nations and SOCHUM committee. We will be serving as the Bureau of the Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee for the SGSITS MUN 2025. This year in the SGSITS Model United Nations, SOCHUM's agenda will be 'Deliberating upon the Culturally Rooted Conflict in Myanmar and Reviving the Ethnic Rohingya Minority.'

The committee shall be deliberating on issues related to the protection of socio-cultural rights of Rohingyas and availability of resources like food, healthcare, sanitation, and education for internally displaced and refugee Rohingyas. Along with finding solutions to existing loopholes in frameworks to help the Rohingyas.

This study guide is brief and informative and serves as a starting point of research for the delegates. The major topics and subtopics have been elaborated upon. The delegates are requested to study this guide properly but should not limit their research to the study guide and are expected to be well-researched according to their portfolios. The committee is expected to address various concerns regarding children and reach a consensus on innovative solutions for making their conditions better and ensuring their right to survive and thrive.

In case of any queries, please feel free to contact us. We are extremely excited to meet all of you and hope that this committee will be a great experience. We will try our best to make this a memorable experience for all of you filled with fruitful debates and ingenious solutions.

Regards,

Shreya Vyas, Chairperson

Siddhesh Bandi, Vice-Chairpersons

Atiksh Sharma, Rapporteur

Introduction to Committee and Agenda

SOCHUM or the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee is the third committee of the General Assembly. It deals with the concerns related to human rights and fundamental freedoms with its main reference guide as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its broad mandate also includes questions relating to the advancement of women's rights, protection of children, indigenous issues, treatment of refugees, right to self-determination, and family issues. It is, thus, evident that SOCHUM deals with the most fundamental needs of an individual, but on a global platform. The committee also discusses agendas like youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, prevention of heinous crime, criminal justice, and control over the international drug epidemic.

The membership of the SOCHUM includes all 193 member countries. Along with these member countries, permanent observers like non-member states and other UN-recognized bodies attend and participate in the discussion, but do not vote. With such a large and diverse representation, the committee seeks to address all possible global viewpoints so it can come up with an ideal framework of social and humanitarian issues. The resolutions passed within SOCHUM are not binding. However, all the resolutions passed in this committee follow majority approval, and thus, the member States do tend to respect and follow the guidelines and recommendations of the committee. It has witnessed and discussed many of the most pressing humanitarian crises and served as a key solution to resolve these issues.

The Rohingyas are a stateless minority from the Rakhine state of Myanmar (Burma). The ethnic cleansing operations carried out in Myanmar included severe violence. This caused a vast majority of Rohingyas to flee the nation causing severe unrest. The refugees live in heavily populated camps where resources are insufficient and healthcare, food and sanitation are inadequate. The Rohingyas who are still in Myanmar face several atrocities and are often victims of violence, abuse and killings. Most of them are displaced internally within Myanmar and are not recognised by the state as citizens and are thus not provided with much assistance or civilian rights.

Key Terms

- Stateless: A person who is not considered a national by any state under the operation of its law.
- Refugee: A person who has been forced to flee their country to escape persecution, war, or natural disaster.
- IDP (Internally Displaced Person): An individual who has been forced to leave their home but has not crossed an international border.
- Cox's Bazar: A district in Bangladesh that hosts a significant majority of Rohingya refugees, making it one of the world's most densely populated places.

The Beginning of the Conflict

The Rohingyas are an ethnic minority community that primarily belong to the Rakhine state of Myanmar. In the eighth century, people living in modern-day Bangladesh and Myanmar converted to Islam under the influence of Arab traders. Buddhists are the major constituent of the population of the Rakhine State while the Muslim Rohingyas are a significant minority. The government of Myanmar primarily fosters the Buddhist and considers Rohingyas to be immigrant Bengalis who are considered cultural pollutants in the nation. Rohingyas are not recognised as citizens of Myanmar and in essence are stateless.

The right to a nationality is recognized as a human right, established in Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It implies the right of each individual to acquire, change and retain a nationality but the Rohingya minority were never considered as the citizens of Myanmar in compliance to THE UNION CITIZENSHIP ACT (1948) and THE NEW CITIZENSHIP ACT(1982) which fails to recognize the descendants of the community that migrated into the country before independence as indigenous ethnic groups even though they were born in Myanmar. In the period from independence (1948) till the military coup (1962), Rohingya had full citizenship rights and could serve in Parliament. During the military rule, their situation worsened and their civil, political, educational and economic rights were gradually stripped away. The 1982 Citizenship Act enforced the exclusion of the Rohingya people from the list of officially recognized minority ethnic groups and denied them many basic rights including citizenship, freedom of movement, access to healthcare and education, marital registration rights and voting rights. This effectively rendered them the largest stateless group in the world devoid of nationality and identity. Hence their Right to Nationality was denied and from then on they have been facing a vicious cycle of subjugation and domination.

Post the attacks on the Myanmar police military in October 2016 and August 2017 by the organisation, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) (Earlier operating under the name Harakah al-Yaqin), the stability of the

rakhine state deteriorated further. This provoked military action by the government. The International Crisis Group said that these operations failed to separate the militants from the civilians which escalated the socio-cultural distress. These attacks by ARSA also lead to an increase in the number of killings, tortures and atrocities on the Rohingyas in the Rakhine state by the anti-Rohingya groups. The 'ethnic cleansing' surged the violence and led to cases where Rohingya homes and villages were systematically burnt down. This led to several Rohingyas fleeing the nation.

Refugees

Discrimination and oppression have resulted in the mass displacement of Rohingya from and within Myanmar, with substantial numbers fleeing to neighbouring countries and beyond, including Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, India, Thailand and Indonesia. Since August 2017, a major humanitarian crisis in the Rakhine State of Myanmar triggered a mass exodus of around three-quarters of a million stateless Rohingya refugees into neighbouring Bangladesh, adding to the estimated 200,000–300,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who had fled Myanmar earlier and the estimated 73,000 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Majority of Rohingya refugees are in Bangladesh due to its physical vicinity to Myanmar and the cultural similarities with the Rohingyas. 1,50,000 refugees have arrived in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar in the period of 18 months from January, 2023 to July, 2025. Bangladesh currently has over 11 lakh refugees. Cox Bazar hosts a significant majority of these refugees with only a mere 37 thousand of them being in Bhasan Char. Cox bazar has an area of merely 24 square kilometers and with its large refugee population, it is one of the world's most densely populated places.

The border between Bangladesh and Myanmar remains officially closed and under surveillance by Border Guard Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh has authorized newly-arrived Rohingya refugees to access emergency assistance and essential services in the camps in Cox's Bazar.

To support so many people who have been displaced and are essentially stateless, a lot of aid and support is required. Refugees often lack proper identification as well as documentation. The refugees arriving in the host countries need to receive proper medical care, food and clean water, shelter and sanitation facilities as well as other basic services and relief items. In the refugee camps several resources such as cooking fuel, education and vaccination for children are also required. Reestablishment programmes are also required to provide the refugees with the initial support and resources through which they can make themselves economically stable. Along with these programmes to revive their status as citizens of a nation. All these

resources and programmes are required for all refugees who are currently living in camps without sufficient resources as well as those places where there are no camps or such provisions and thus the Rohingya population is at risk of collapsing.

Internally Displaced People

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, but who have not crossed an international border and therefore remain within their own country.

The Rohingya crisis has produced many such individuals; after experiencing generations of institutionalized persecution and conflict in Myanmar, hundreds of thousands were internally displaced in the country's Rakhine State, with significant recent waves following the 2017 military crackdown. Following the 2012 inter-communal violence, tens of thousands of Rohingya were forced into IDP camps in Sittwe township, a move that severely restricted their freedom and access to resources. By the end of 2023, it was estimated that over 2.6 million people were internally displaced in Myanmar, with a significant portion being Rohingya.

Humanitarian Exploitation

Even though many humanitarian aids are trying to improve the condition of refugees in refugee camps in Myanmar, Bangladesh etc still the condition of Rohingya people is substandard. Bangladesh has a long history of hosting Rohingya from Rakhine State in Myanmar in the Cox's Bazar district. More than 75% of these refugees are women and children, and up to 95% rely on humanitarian assistance. Even though the UN and other NGOs have tried to provide humanitarian aid, the condition of refugees keeps deteriorating due to the influx of a large number of refugees as a result of the mass ethnic cleansing initiative that was taken by the Myanmar military. The mass influx of 712,179 refugees from 25 August to 31 December 2017 and an additional 13,223 who arrived since January 2018, caused a major humanitarian emergency. The Rohingya minority face competition in acquiring jobs and hence their basic right to earn a living is threatened.

Healthcare

While the United Nations General Assembly has committed to meet the basic health needs of refugees, the funding gap for UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals reached 65% in 2022. The health needs of the Rohingya population are substantial and diverse due to their history of marginalisation, trauma, uncertainty, poor living conditions, limited water, sanitation and hygiene provisions and exposure to environmental risks (such as monsoons, cyclones and fires) in these refugee camps. To effectively implement health programmes, initiatives have been taken to understand the burden and trends of disease, potential public health practices and primary healthcare utilisation among Rohingya refugees and adjacent host communities. In the late 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic tore through the vast majority of Rohingya population was migrated from Cox Bazar to a deserted island in the Bay of Bengal where even the humanitarian stakeholders thought that the conditions to live were inadequate. These islands were defined as prison for refugees by the Rohingya minority. This particular instance highlights the fact that these camps are not fully equipped to manage a pandemic breakout. Also access to healthcare remains a

significant challenge for Rohingya refugees, primarily due to their undocumented status.

Education

The education situation of the thousands of Rohingya children who have sought refuge in Bangladesh, most of whom are not receiving an education, is a matter of concern. The education of around 230,000 Rohingya refugee children is under threat due to an acute and deepening funding crisis. In recent months, UNICEF has faced a significant decline in humanitarian funding for its operations in the Rohingya refugee response, affecting the education of 83 per cent of school-age children in the camps, who are enrolled in UNICEF-supported learning centers. Despite exhaustive efforts to attract new resources and reprioritize activities, funding gaps have forced UNICEF to take painful decisions, including suspending support for host community volunteer teachers working with Kindergarten to Grade 2 learners.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is referred to as the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving individuals through force, fraud, or duress for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, sexual slavery and even for organ trafficking. As of August 2019, IOM has directly identified 96 Rohingya victims of trafficking who had been in the camp settlements.

Causes of Trafficking:

1. **Poverty:** Sometimes families have no choice but to abandon their child due to poverty, these children fall into the hands of traffickers. This also causes the number of children living on the streets to increase.
2. **Humanitarian Crisis:** Countries that are stricken by natural disasters, and the countries which are in conflict often have higher rates of child trafficking

since in the chaos it is very easy for the children to get lost and then abducted by people who sell them off to as a means of livelihood.

3. Illiteracy and lack of education make families targets of traffickers. People often get tricked by them and sign documents or contracts which most often have the wordings as such which equals such that the person is signing away their life to the person who has made the contract.

Myanmar coup and its Aftermath

The Rohingya crisis predates the 2021 coup, with the Tatmadaw conducting military crackdowns, including a severe crackdown starting in August 2017 that forced over a million Rohingya to flee to other countries, primarily Bangladesh. The sustained violence and persecution led to a massive refugee crisis, making the Rohingya one of the world's most persecuted minority groups.

The Myanmar coup of 2021 further complicated the existing Rohingya crisis by destabilizing the country and hindering any potential progress towards addressing the plight of the Rohingya people, a Muslim minority group subjected to ongoing persecution and displacement. The coup led to widespread protests and resistance against the military junta, plunging Myanmar into deeper political and social instability. The coup halted any nascent steps toward resolving the Rohingya issue and exacerbated the underlying conditions of oppression and statelessness that the Rohingya face.

The ongoing conflict and crackdown in the aftermath of the coup likely intensified human rights abuses and further isolated the Rohingya community. The military takeover, led by the Tatmadaw (armed forces), replaced the elected civilian government, creating further conflict and instability. In summary, the 2021 coup did not resolve the Rohingya crisis; instead, it exacerbated the existing humanitarian catastrophe by introducing further political instability, violence, and a breakdown of governance, all of which have had devastating consequences for the Rohingya people and their hopes for safety and a dignified future.

Economic problems

With more than 90% of the Rohingya population living in Bangladesh, it was bound to cause financial issues in the state of Bangladesh. Bangladesh already had a higher population density, coupled with the fact that they had to take in 900,000 refugees made it so that they couldn't handle this influx alone. The Rohingyas often had their basic human rights denied to them. Bangladesh, has an unemployment rate of 5.30%, exports approximately 60,000 workers abroad every year which indicates the country's inability to create employment and struggle to generate employment for its unemployed youths, let alone the refugees. So, the possibility of integrating the Rohingya into the local community is a far cry. Supply chain disruptions, strong domestic demand and rising commodity prices have caused inflation to skyrocket. Coupled with exchange rate volatility, this was associated with a depreciation of the Bangladesh taka against the US dollar. According to FAO, Bangladesh is among 45 countries at high risk of facing a food crisis.

Furthermore, Bangladesh's economy is facing the worst crisis in recent times. The pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine have pushed Bangladesh's economic situation beyond control. The economic problems during 2021-2023 included a significant surge in global inflation, a risk of global recession, supply chain disruptions, and an energy crisis, all stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic's aftermath and worsened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These issues led to declining real wages, heightened poverty, and a noticeable slowdown in global economic growth, with developing economies such as Bangladesh particularly vulnerable to increased debt and slower growth.

All the above facts indicate that Bangladesh's economy is in deep trouble and that the people are struggling. Bangladesh, with its growing population and dire economic problems, cannot bear the responsibility of Rohingya refugees alone.

Navigating Information black holes about the crisis

This century belongs to the digital age, access to basic information is a basic necessity and right of every person. It is a necessity for dignity and justice in today's era, especially for minority groups such as the Rohingya as they have no other means to voice their opinions and problems. They rely on media outlets to represent them.

Information related to the Rohingyas- ethnic Muslim minority group of Myanmar had been denied to the world. The information black hole period in Myanmar refers to the time where the state prevented media reports and data transmission from being broadcasted. Information regarding the true scale of damage caused to the Rohingyas was withheld, numbers manipulated to make it so that the world does not realise the true scale of horrors the Rohingyas had to face. These black holes exist both in conflict zones - Rakhine State and in refugee camps across borders.

These groups had faced persecution in Myanmar for decades, denied citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law that labelled them as "illegal immigrants". The situation escalated in 2017 when the Myanmar military launched what was cited as "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" by the United Nations. After which over 7,00,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. This data was hidden from the rest of the world as the basic right of information was taken from them, which typically marks the massive information black hole.

The Internet was shut down in the Rakhine State, there was a 500 day blackout between 2019-2020. Not only that, foreign journalists and aid agencies were banned from communicating to and from the Rohingyas. To them, the basic need of mobile phones too came with a lot of restrictions. The Rohingya voices were suppressed especially on local platforms and social media. The timely reports of evidence, mass killings, village burning's were all not documented and hence precise reports and records are missing which has hindered accountability. Disease outbreaks, fires, malnutrition and other crises were neglected leading to humanitarian loss.

International and UN help provided

The first instance of voices being raised for the Rohingya came in the form of Gambia filing a case against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention in The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in November, 2019.

Gambia argued that from around October 2016 the Myanmar military (the 'Tatmadaw') and other Myanmar security forces began widespread and systematic 'clearance operations', the term that Myanmar itself uses, against the Rohingya group. The genocidal acts committed during these operations were intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group, in whole or in part, by the use of mass murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as the systematic destruction by fire of their villages, often with inhabitants locked inside burning houses. From August 2017 onwards, such genocidal acts continued with Myanmar's resumption of 'clearance operations' on a more massive and wider geographical scale. The Gambia contends that these acts constitute violations of the Genocide Convention. It states that it has made this claim known to Myanmar since September 2018, but that Myanmar has continued to deny any wrongdoing.

Over 1 million Rohingya have fled Myanmar due to ethnic tensions. The UN has since then been at its feet trying to provide emergency aid, demanding accountability and trying to discover long term solutions. It has been using biometric registration systems to track, keep record and assist refugees. It will make it easier to navigate and provide resources to refugees accordingly.

It has launched a WPF - World Food Programme, where monthly food rations are distributed to the refugees. It has also launched nutrition programs targeting children, pregnant women and elders. The UN has also launched children friendly spaces, learning centres and vaccination camps for children. It also ensures that the basic necessities like clean water, first aid kits, and food is provided to all. Many NGOs and Organisations have also come forward to extend a hand forward by providing support. Groups like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), BRAC, Oxford, have contributed to health, education, sanitation and women's safety.

European Union, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia are the major contributors to the Rohingya humanitarian response. The US provided \$2.1 billion assistance and EU €200 million aid. Such steps have been taken by International bodies to ensure Rohingya refugees safety and security.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer

1. What measures can be taken to help the Rohingyas in refugee camps?
How can the refugees be re-established?
2. How can the distribution of the Rohingyas be made better?
3. What steps must be taken to safeguard Rohingyas rights as a cultural minority?
4. What steps can be taken to help Rohingyas get integrated into a nation?
How can they be repatriated?
5. What are the loopholes in existing treaties and programmes? How can they be fixed?
6. How can the Rohingyas in Myanmar be safeguarded?

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