

The Rohingya People: A Struggle for Justice in Myanmar



(Fahmida, 2017)

Abstract

This portfolio discusses a current humanitarian issue and focuses on the burden of the Rohingya people, an ethnic minority group in Myanmar, hoping to gain better treatment and not be driven from their homes. This includes the identification of two primary issues as the basis of this analysis: the Rohingya crisis and issues of identity and persecution of Rohingya people. The first part of the paper focuses on the Rohingya of today, giving an overview of their history, the challenges they experience, and the political and criminological causes of the persecution of Rohingya. The second part includes a critical review of the state hegemonic discourse in which the Myanmar government, military, and nationalist organizations' perceptions of the Rohingya are examined. The third part focuses on the community level concerning the sample testimonies and cultural representations to explore how the Rohingya conceptualize their oppression and social suffering. The last part presents a restorative justice model in terms of justice for the Rohingya and how this could be made achievable through some internal lawsuits and international support. This paper uses criminal and political concepts like structural violence and restorative justice to analyze the Rohingya situation and the way forward to justice.

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Introduction

The Rohingya people, the Muslim minority from Myanmar's Rakhine state, are one of the most persecuted ethnic groups in the world who had been facing systematic oppression, violence, and discrimination in the form of forced displacement, having their citizenship stripped off them as discussed in (Abdumannonov Bobomurod, 2025). The crisis came into the international limelight in 2017 when Myanmar's military commenced the persecution of Rohingya people in which thousands have been killed and about Over 700000 have been forced to flee to neighboring country namely Bangladesh. Still today the Rohingya remains marginalized and discriminated both in Myanmar and in refugee camps, they do not have rights to education, health services or employment (Afroza Anwary, 2024). From this approach, the portfolio intertwines criminological and politics where it draws on structural violence, settler colonialism, and restorative justice in expounding the Rohingya issue (Yang, 2025). The injury is health meant to draw attention to the violation of the rights of the Rohingya people and also to give recommendations to ensure that justice is served (Albela, 2025).

Part 1: An Outsider's Perspective: Current Context of the Marginalised Community

Background Information on the Rohingya People

The Rohingya people are the persecuted ethnic Muslim who have origins from Myanmar's Rakhine state. They have been residing in Myanmar for many generations, their history can be traced back at least to the 15th century and they have their own language, culture and conventions. However, the present government of Myanmar has failed to categorize them as one of the official indigenous people of the country in terms of nationality (Yang, 2025). This lack of recognition became even worse after promulgation of the Citizenship Law of 1982 which stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship status. A couple of formal documents mentioned in the law stated that they have to attest the Myanmar governing laws, where the Rohingya could not give documents of their genealogy back to 1823 (Bhattacharjee, 2024).

Therefore, the Rohingya people were considered as 'entirely foreign' to the country and they were not entitled to some of the fundamental human rights such as education, health care, work and movements. According to Bhattacharyya and Das (2024), for the years, Rohingya has been in a process of being thrown out of political, social and economic mainstream in

Myanmar state. Due to their non-citizenship, they have been subjected to violence and more so exploited within these nations resulting to human rights abuses such as forced eviction, unlawful imprisonment, and brutal crackdown. In this aspect therefore, women have been left out and continue to suffer due to the above stated reasons.

Challenges and Barriers

When surveying the main issues the Rohingya people experience in Myanmar, the primary problem is that they are stateless people denied citizenship, which leads to legal discrimination and persecution. These are mainly social, political and economic challenges that are often posed in the course of implementing policies.

Social Barriers: The Rohingya in Myanmar are locked out from the rest of the Buddhist and they dwell in poor and cramped up area in Rakhine State. They have very little autonomy in their mobility as they moved around by permits which are issued by the government thereby limiting their mobility within the country or access to services such as healthcare and education (Cheong, 2025).

Political barriers: The Myanmarese government and armed forces have continuously claimed that Rohingyas are the ‘Bengali militants’ which are actually a group of illegitimate immigrants in Myanmar though the Rohingya has always lived in the place. And this has been used as the reason for their marginalization in the political life in Myanmar (Yang, 2025). The Rohingya’s right to hold a voter card or being a candidate in the parliamentary elections is absent; they have no right to make any political participation in Myanmar.

Economic Barriers: Rohingya people are from economically backward class in Myanmar in terms of having a standard living income (Cheong, 2024). They may not be allowed to hold a legal job, avail any public service, has rights to own any property, or have a valid citizenship. They can participate in subsistence agriculture and prefer finding jobs in the lowest paid employment, which makes it easy for them to be exploited.

Political and Criminological Context

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar is a political and criminological problem supported by the state, the military, and nationalists. Currently, the Myanmar military is referred as Tatmadaw which has politically and socially power in Myanmar and their operation is significant in this process of utilizing violence against Rohingya (Chew and Jangai Jap, 2024). The Rohingya minority has been pushed to the fringes of Burmese society due to the policies that have been

adopted by the military, at the time of the military regime and at the time of quasi-civilian government as well. Such policies with the support of the government have comprised acts of violence like the 2017 genocide in which thousands of Rohingya have been killed, women raped and their villages burnt down.

According to Beyond Bengal Deep book, the idea of structural violence is very relevant in explaining the suffering of the Rohingya. Structural violence therefore defines the generational harm that social structures cause to individuals and their ability to meet basic need; this is a society structural type of violence (Biswas, 2024). Regarding the Rohingya Muslims, governmental policies and even military actions lead to organizing their lives and collective existence as an excluded, poor and violent entity. The military approach is a typical form of structural violence with the specific intent to dominate and continue the process of Othering the Rohingya population.

The persecution of the Rohingya is termed as ethnic cleansing, or genocide at best. It is in 2017 that military operations aimed at removing Boko Haram from the areas called the “clearance operation” resulted in the killings of thousands and displacement of over 700000 individuals (Yang, 2025). These actions have been termed as genocide by the United Nations saying that the violence was rampant and systematized, and the Rohingya was targeted in the violence because of ethnic and religious differences.

Global Visibility

The victims of Rohingya crisis have not received adequate international support and attention despite the fact that their plight has been condemned by the global community. The UN and other human rights bodies criticised the events as ethnic cleansing and sometimes even genocide and called on Myanmar to provide Rohingyas citizenship rights along with ceasing violence by strong armed forces. Nevertheless, the actions taken by the international community have mostly remained at the level of rhetoric with little diplomatic action regarding Myanmar or its policies (Cheong, 2024).

The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and other countries are still living in extremely confined places and astoundingly insufficient services. Though, some aid has been given to Bangladesh some of the international organizations that included conditions for their return back to Myanmar which still seems to be a far-off solution. There is no proper follow-up, and the international community has failed to come to their rescue, thus leaving the Rohingya in a vulnerable and hopeless state (Cheong, 2024).

Part 2: The Hegemonic Perspective: A Critical Exploration of State/Authority/Other Response

State Perspective on the Rohingya

Myanmar's attitude towards the Rohingya is that they are enemies who do not belong in the country at all. The Rohingya's status in Myanmar is that they are perceived and labeled as "illegal immigrants" despite their long residence in the country. This classification originates from the 1982 American Citizenship Law that supposed to grant them citizenship but rather treats them as foreigners, take away all their rights as humans (Costas Laoutides, 2024). This has been done on the ground that Rohingya are illegal migrants from Bangladesh who migrated to Myanmar during the British colonialism period (Yang, 2025).

This notion is not only present in the government's discourse about the event but is indeed prevalent in the entirety of Myanmar society. To the Burmese population that is predominantly Buddhist, Rohingya is recognized as an undesirable foreign element that poses a threat to national unity. This is especially so given the burgeoning nationalist Buddhist movements like the 969 movement through which the Burmese Buddhist mobs advance political stability campaigns of hostility against Burmese Muslims and calls for their expulsion from the country (Green et al., 2025). These opinions, to a greater extent have been supported by the Myanmar government either directly or implicitly which has led to the continued persecution of the Rohingya people.

Impact of Colonisation and State's Role in Marginalisation

Education in Myanmar received influence through the British control in previous years and that the current treatment of the Rohingya is due to this colonial influence. It may also be due to the British colonization of Myanmar where the British authority sought to expand their economic policies such as bringing people from Bengal that is now known as Bangladesh. This conjuring of wave of Muslim immigrants into Rakhine state led to demographic changes that brought into the society the cause of ethnical tension mainly between Rohingya Muslims on one side and the Buddhist on the other (Hossain, 2024).

This allowed the various ethnic groups to be used by the British colonial masters in their struggle for control of the country's resources, and this significantly contributed to the continued persecution of the Rohingya. The stress made by the Myanmar government towards the Bamar nationalism given the colonial practice of forming ethnic divide only

worsens the situation for the Rohingya. It is not only a question of legal status but it is part of persistent ethnic nationalism that grants privileges for the Bamar Buddhists and puts the Rohingya in the category of inferior citizens (Egreteau and Myat, 2024).

Criminological Theories

State violence, thus, is an important factor that has been used to explain the Rohingya plight in Myanmar. The concept of State-Sponsored Violence relates to violence done to a certain group by the state or performed in cognizance of the state. Especially the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) not only committed crimes against the Rohingya population, but it persecuted them in a systematic manner wherein hundreds of Rohingya men and women were killed, sexual violence was committed against Rohingya women and girls, and Rohingya villages were razed to the ground (Yang, 2025).

In understanding the Rohingya's oppression the concept of structural violence is also valid. This kind of violence entails the state of affairs where political, social, and economic relations create an environment that withholds people's necessities, rights, and chances. Structural violence in Myanmar is eradication of the Rohingya rights to citizenship, education, health care, and job opportunities in their own country, and the inability or unwillingness of the state to protect them. This institutionalized marginalization has led to subjecting the Rohingya to physical abuse, dislocation and abuse of their rights.

Also, exclusion politics also contribute to the persecution of the Rohingya people. This term refers to the process through which certain groups are deliberately barred from voting and other rights within the political demesne (Green et al., 2025). The Myanmar government has omitted Rohingya from its vision of an ethno-linguistically homogeneous Bamar Buddhist nation, to justify persecuting the Rohingya even more.

Justifications for Inequality

The Myanmar authorities always rationalise the segregation and prejudice for the Rohingya minorities as a combination of nationalist and neoliberal notions.

Nationalism is also responsible for such action because the state is guided by Moral Buddhist ethnonationalism which only recognizes Bamar Buddhists as true citizens. As for the ideology, other ethnic and religious groups are seen as being inferior, which is used as a justification for the exclusion of the Rohingya and other minorities from the mainstream Myanmar narrative (Hossain, 2024). The notion claiming that Myanmar is a Buddhist nation,

created the assumption that Rohingya as Muslims are not wanted and are intruders in the country. Thus, nationalism becomes the foundation for their exclusion as well as violence against them (Yang, 2025). Therefore, the treatment of the Rohingya is justified by Myanmar government's adherences to nationalist and neoliberalisms. First, these frameworks maintain systematic inequalities, exclusion and violence, which go on to describe how state ideologies perpetuate oppression of minorities.

Part 3: The Perspective of the Community: A Critical Analysis of the Community's Experience of Marginalisation

Rohingya's Own Narratives

The Rohingya's suffering, the ethnic cleansing, the refugees and the elimination of their identity is therefore narrated based on the first-person witness and survivors of the Myanmar military brutality. Some of the Rohingya refugees who sought refuge in Bangladesh talked about their experience in the hands of Myanmar's military referred to as the clearance operations of 2017. They recounted experiences of military attacks on their villages, which saw the forces burnt houses and homes, killed female and male relatives, and raped women and young girls (Humairah Muljabar et al., 2025). This provided some cases, one was about a Rohingya woman living in refugee camp narrated how soldiers attacked their village and killed her father and her young brother with her children during the escape (Hossain et al., 2025).

Personnal narrative of the genocide can also be observed through art and poetry that Rohingya share with their people in different countries. One major theme that appears to be portrayed in these expressions is humiliation, the poems representing the Rohingya as if they are strangers in their own country, waiting to be vindicated (Islam, 2024). These stories give strength to the community, but at the same time show how much the Joomla! has been and still is a community shaped violence and displacement.

Causes of Oppression and Discrimination

From the side of the Rohingya people, the sources of their suffering are unchangeable race and religious prejudice, as well as the colonial history and the contemporary armed conflict in Myanmar. Among them the first method is the religious discrimination that the Rohingya minority feels in Myanmar, which is considered as a predominantly Buddhist nation. The emergence of Buddhist ultra-nationalism in terms of the 969 Movement has made most

Myanmar people feel that Islam and Muslim in specific are altogether an ‘alien’ entity (Hossain et al., 2025). This nationalist narrative has been upheld by Myanmar’s military that have over time referred to the Rohingya as “Bengalis” or “Bengali Muslims” simply because they are from Bangladesh even though the Rohingya is an indigenous ethnic group in Myanmar.

The further political struggle in Myanmar for the question of national identity and ethnic unification plays a role in the persecution of the Rohingya. The Myanmar government and especially the Bamar dominated government, has taken steps towards developing a uniform identity forward on the basis of which the people and the nation of Myanmar can be governed. It has been done by eradicating ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Rohingya, who do not belong to the oppressive and patriotic definition of what it is to be Burmese or Myanmar (Kamal, Kaiser and Mariano, 2024). The This political marginalization of the Rohingya is also linked to the military’s intention to assert its dominance over the ethnic minorities and the natural resources within the geographical locations such as Rakhine State where the Rohingya resides (Yang, 2025).

Impact of Discrimination

The suffering a Rohingya has to go through brings about severe physical, psychological and socio-economic effects. On this account, the Rohingya have been attacked, driven out of their homes and killed by the military in Myanmar. The military operations of 2017 entailed the loss of numerous people’s lives and many more others were harassed, raped and physically assaulted (Kolås, 2025). It therefore explains how the violence has affected the physical as well as the health state of the Rohingya population due to poor health care in Myanmar and poor health care in the camps in Bangladesh (Islam and Ahmed, 2024).

From a criminological point of view, the discriminations faced by the Rohingya people are structural violence. Structural violence refers to a situation where structures which form an aspect of the society negatively impact on individuals and how they are able to get what they need or gain a decent standard of living (Martuscelli, Ahmed and Sammonds, 2022). The policy that robs the Rohingya of their citizenship, denial of basic rights and the violation is structural violence exerted by the state and society structure. One should not consider Rohingya’s oppression as the event that happened occasionally, but instead as the part of the structural factors operating within the Myanmar society and its laws.

Community's View on Escape and Justice

This is why the Rohingya perceiving their possibility to escape their subordination and to have justice directly linked to their idea of getting their citizenship back and being able to go back to Myanmar. For the people in the diaspora, justice is perceived in the context of acceptance of their wish and right to live as citizens of the country Myanmar (Uddin, 2024b). The Rohingya has demanded to be granted their citizenship right and their identity to be acknowledged as a distinct ethnic group and the international law protecting their rights.

To summarize, this study determined that the Rohingya's views of the oppression they face and justice involve with experiencing the continuation of the violence, historical struggles, and hope for the change in the recognition, authority, and justice (Md. Rafiqul Islam and Khatun, 2024). The concept of liberation is evident in the community's stories of survival and triumph, but these triumphs hide the painful scars of prejudice and marginalization. The communities' demand for justice cannot be ignored since it is a call for justice that people in the world should heed (Obaidullah and Hossain, 2025).

Part 4: A Social Justice Perspective; Proposal for a Restorative Response and Recommendations for Policy

Social Justice for the Rohingya

The solution to the problem the Rohingya people has faced for decades of ethnic cleansing is all about social justice. These are civil equal rights for Rohingya that aims at ensuring they get an acknowledgement of their Burmese citizenship and free from discrimination in the legal and social setting in Myanmar. The first and the most direct way of achieving social justice is the restoration of Citizenship Act rights to the Rohingya that was stripped off by Myanmar in 1982. Citizenship is not only a legal right but also an opportunity to gain the rights of other civil liberties comprising of freedom of movement, access to health care, education, among them as well as right to work (Rupita Rupita et al., 2025). Then again, granting of citizenship will promote the dignity of the Rohingya in order to have legal rights and recognition in Myanmar societies.

Another aspect of the social justice for the Rohingya is to safeguard the people from further acts of brutality. Thus, the military's action as well as the genocide performed in 2017 shows the state as an actor that kills its own population. All these actions indicate that accountability is a policy whereby individuals that had a direct hand in the violation of human rights should

face punishment so as to regain the confidence of the Rohingya (Ware and Costas Laoutides, 2024).

Restorative Justice Proposal

There is an attempt to point out that restorative justice provide a good model of how the wrong done to Rohingya could be addressed and what should be done to the offenders and to the wounded community. In the case of the Rohingya situation, when speaking of restorative justice, it is necessary to address the persons responsible for these rights abuses which are the Myanmar state and the Burmese military (Md. Rafiqul Islam and Khatun, 2024). Accountability may take the form of the International Criminal Court or a truth seeking commission that will admit the crimes committed against the Myanmar Rohingya. It would enable victims to reveal details of the ordeal they have undergone and get this acknowledged, which is an important step towards overcoming the ordeal.

To overcome these limitations, it will be proper to recommend an indigenous based justice model. This model would be based on the main values and activities of the Rohingya people and their traditional approach to reconciliation. Healing-based justice that is common among the indigenous peoples pays emphasis on reconciliation and meeting the needs of the society (Md. Rafiqul Islam and Khatun, 2024). It could be quite helpful to engage the actual participants of the Rohingya community in the design phase of the justice process as this would equip the process with enough cultural sensitivity and context (Uddin, 2024a).

Policy Recommendations

There is little doubt that significant changes must take place in the policy and the legislation in order for the Rohingya to have their rights reinstated and to be shielded from further abuse. Zema suggests that the reform that is required most urgently is the restoration enfranchisement. The current Act of 1982 indeed must be changed and the Rohingya must be given full citizenship rights (Salehin and Hossain, 2025). This would help them to be accorded the legal status of citizens in Myanmar with all the rights that accrue to the citizen of the country. This is actually a reform not only in the legal area but is also the key to achieving the principle or principle of protecting the rights and ensuring the social fulfillment and dignity of the Rohingya people (Soundararajan et al., 2023).

The peoples to accept these reforms, the international community must ensure involvement. There are important international sources like United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that should be employed in order to demand the Rohingya's

rights and in doing so to exert pressure on the Myanmar authorities to change their policy. Humanitarian agencies must come out and continue documenting abuses so that there can be imposition of sanctions, and coming out to support the Rohingya in their fight for justice (Sayedul Husan and Islam, 2024). Thus, countries with huge hosting camps such as Bangladesh should also be assisted with international support needed to ensure basic Rohingya needs and wants, among them safe shelter, education, enhanced health standards, and job employment (Sikder et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The Rohingya people remain one of the most vulnerable groups of the contemporary world where their rights have been violated in the most atrocious manner. The Rohingya has suffered from discrimination, violence, forced displacement and deprivation of their fundamental rights for several decades. In conclusion, the narrative with regards to the Rohingya has a historical beginning in colonial days and steadily grew to be worsened by the Myanmar government's policies to exclude them from the society and then to the international platform right up to nowadays. Despite the condemnation of the violence as well as discrimination, the Rohingya people still face poor living standards; they are displaced from their country and not considered citizens of the only country they know.

Nonetheless, in developing the way forward, this paper has centred its call for justice for the Rohingya on the following course of action: restoration of citizenship, repealing of prejudicial policies, reconciliation and compensation. In principle, restorative justice is an appealing process involving accountability, restoration of relationships, compensation, and rehabilitation because it attempts to bring in restoration as a measure of justice. It appears that indigenous-based justice solutions which are founded on the native culture and ethno policy may provide a better solution to the ills incurred on the Rohingya. Additionally, more extensive policy changes in foreign as well as domestic contexts are required to make the return of Rohingya to Myanmar safe and honorable.

In conclusion, to work towards justice for the Rohingya nation, it calls not only for resolution of wrongs inflicted in the past in Myanmar and in the world but also for addressing their living in their homeland and in the world in the future. The Rohingya issue must not be set aside hence the support the international community give to Myanmar the same has to be

солнечный to the Rohingya people. To achieve justice and peace for the Rohingya, intensive national, regional, and global lobbying needs to be done by enhancing human rights and equality as the method of reconciliation.

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