

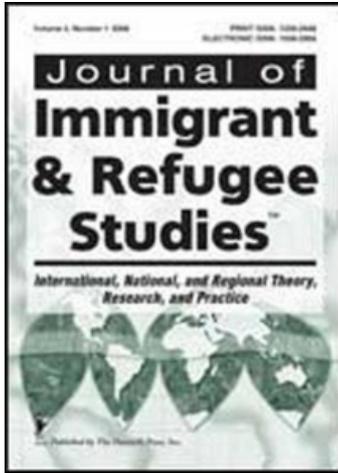
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### Rohingya Refugees to Bangladesh: Historical Exclusions and Contemporary Marginalization

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# **Rohingya Refugees to Bangladesh: Historical Exclusions and Contemporary Marginalization**

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*Rohingya refugees from the Arakan state of Myanmar found their ways a number of times to Bangladesh to escape state-sponsored persecution. While there is no dearth of studies on refugees, Rohingya has so far received very little research attention. This article tries to understand the dynamics and severity of reported humiliation by the government on the Rohingya population, and how are they marginalized in their destination points. A qualitatively and quantitatively designed questionnaire was used to interview 134 refugees from two existing camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses reinforce that the level of abuse and persecution perpetrated upon them surpass all human rights standards. This was confirmed by both the in-depth and the case studies. These people were forced out by state-sponsored persecution and again they are forced to be repatriated due to the fact that Bangladesh cannot afford to welcome them back.*

**KEYWORDS** *Rohingya, refugee, Arakan, Myanmar, Bangladesh*

## BACKGROUND

It is difficult for anyone who has never been forcibly displaced to imagine what it is like to be a refugee.

— Kofi Annan

Contemporary global concerns essentially revolve around the dynamics of environment, climate change, health, war, and widespread poverty. However, Myanmar tends to remain a peripheral entity from the centralities of the current global discourse. Arakani minorities in Myanmar struggle to

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obtain exorcism from persecutions perpetrated on them by the tyrannical government. The world conscience sends an impression that they are blind to the call for democracy of the mass population. No loud protests are heard from the authoritative nations against the captive democracy in Myanmar. Historically, freedom has remained a myth for the Myanmarese<sup>1</sup> in general and the minorities in particular. Arakan is the district that has been the witness to the endured persecutions on its inhabitants of varied range. The argument employed here is whether this population from Arakan should be considered “refugees” or “stateless.” Determinations as to who qualifies as a refugee are subjective because political and economic boundaries have become blurred, although the human rights groups and political activists tend to expand the definition to entail those fleeing catastrophes emerging in the natural landscapes in current times—climate change, for instance. Refugees, by definition, are those fleeing from war, conflict, persecution, or a fear of persecution (Abrar, 1999; Aman-ud-dollah, 1999; Barsky, 2000; Robinson & Segrott, 2002) that act in the decision to escape (Middleton, 2005, p. 2; Smith, 1991). Refugee flows, asylum-seekers, internal displaces, and development-induced displacees have increased exponentially in volume and have gained political significance since the end of the Cold War (Castles, 2003). Generally, there are two major patterns of refugee—first, the vast majority of refugees are hosted by neighboring countries with over 80% remaining within their region of origin due to the gravitation law effect; second, the number of urban refugees continues to grow. While I agree with this statement, I defer widely at the same time because refugee flows by and large are directed to the nearest countries with weaker borders that share identical culture and religion. Therefore, Rohingyas headed in huge number to Bangladesh, rather than to India (Figure 1).

While the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has fallen—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) responsibility was estimated at 25.1 million—available information suggests that a total of 67 million people had been forcibly displaced at the end of 2007, including 16 million refugees, of whom 11.4 million fall under UNHCR’s mandate and some 4.6 million Palestinian refugees under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The number of IDPs is estimated at 51 million worldwide; some 26 million were displaced as a result of armed conflict and another 25 million were displaced by natural disasters. In addition, while often not considered as being displaced per se, it is estimated that there exists some 12 million stateless people worldwide (UNHCR, 2008; Russell & Teitelbaum, 1992).

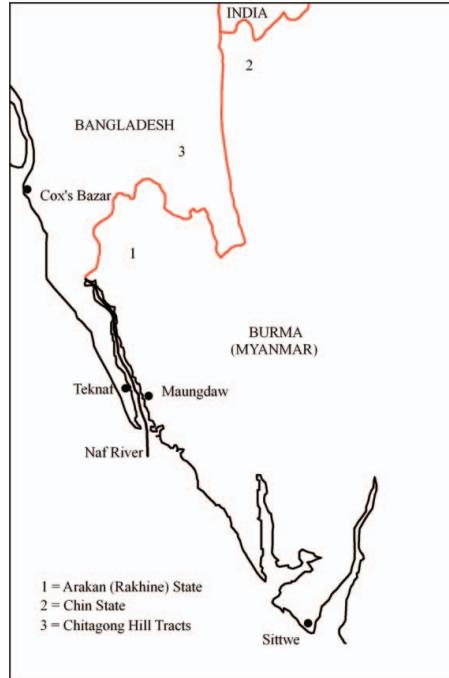
Over half of Myanmar’s population consists of individuals from diverse ethnic groups<sup>2</sup> with substantial numbers of kin beyond its borders. The Beginning in 1824, British ruled Burma for 64 years and incorporated it into its Indian Empire to administer as a province of India until 1937, when it



**FIGURE 1** Showing the Border That Bangladesh and Myanmar Share. (color figure available online)

became a self-governing colony (Aung, 1967; Yegar, 1972); the independence from the Commonwealth was attained in 1948. General Ne Win dominated the government from 1962 to 1988 (Asia Watch, 1992), first as military ruler, then as self-appointed president. Legislative elections were held in 1990 and the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD),<sup>3</sup> won a landslide victory. The ruling junta, however, refused to hand over power. That was the pathway to sending democracy to exile for Myanmar.

The line separating Myanmar and Bangladesh (Figure 2) came into being as a humble boundary line between districts of British India. When this huge colony was split into British Burma and British India in 1937, the border took on a semi-international status for the first time. It became fully international when the British relinquished power in India and Pakistan in 1947 and Burma in 1948. The Naf River (see Figure 2) is an elongated estuary in the extreme southeast of Cox's Bazar district dividing it from Arakan in Myanmar. It rises in the Arakan hills on the southeastern borders of the district and falls into the Bay of Bengal (Maudood, 1987), varying from 1.61 km to 3.22 km in its width. Akyab in Myanmar is on the left bank and Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh is on the right bank of the river. The territories of both Burma and Bangladesh were administered by one state, British India.



**FIGURE 2** Myanmar-Bangladesh Borderland and the River Naf. (color figure available online)

In 1971, a revolt in Pakistan led to a war of secession in which Bangladesh emerged. The border between Burma and Pakistan then became the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The length of the border, however, still remains contested owing to the fact that the government of Bangladesh and the CIA claim 193 km while Myanmar claims 272 km. The Arakan district, along with the Naf river, does not seem to have been formally demarcated after the separation of Burma in 1937 (Islam, 2009; Schendel, 2006). North Rakhine State (NRS), separated from the rest of Myanmar by a mountain range, was originally called Arakan but the name was changed in 1962 when the military took over power and they changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar (Couts, 2005).

The official population of the Arakan or Rakhine State, where most Rohingyas dwell, numbered around 2.6 million. In addition, another million-plus Rohingyas reside in the Rakhine State (a 2009 UN figure of the Rohingya population in the Arakan was 723,000; Government of the Union of Myanmar, 1997), which implies that the population of the Rakhine State is between 4 and 5 million. The Rakhine State is the home of the officially designated majority—the Buddhist Rakhines. The distinction between Rohingyas and

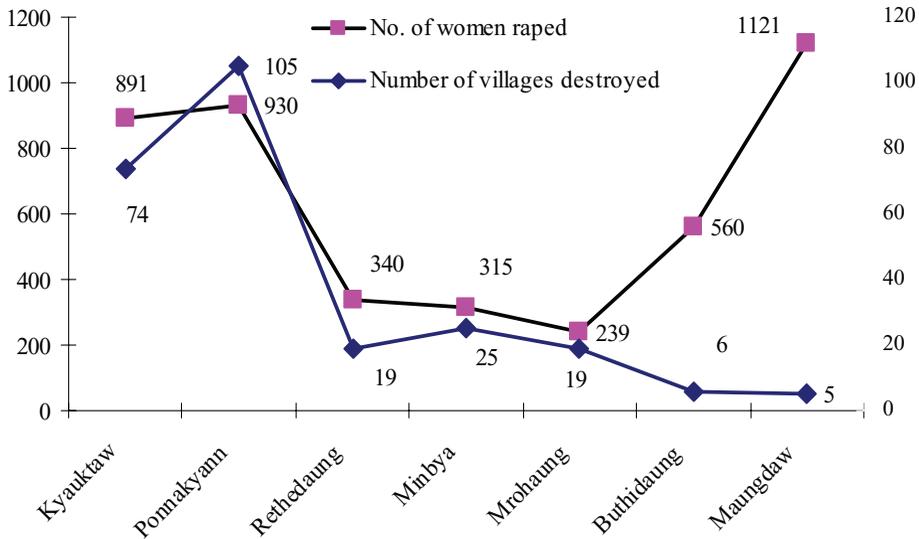
Rakhines here is a deliberate one, not so much for semantics as for the state (Ahmed, 2009).

The word “Rohingya” is a taboo in the Capital City of Yangon. Ahmed (2009) argued that discrimination and taboo issues are government-generated because the National Museum in Yangon, which has collection of materials of all subnationalities (labeled by the government as “national races” and categorized into seven in terms of language origin—Shan, Mon, Karen, Kayah, Chin, Kachin, and Rakhine), makes no mention of the Rohingyas nor does it have any collection dedicated to them.

Dating back to 1784, the Rohingyas were conquered originally from the mainly Muslim Kingdom of Arakan and were incorporated into the majority Buddhist kingdom of Burma. Many Rohingya refugee left for Cox’s Bazar during that period. As mentioned before, during the 1800s, Burma was administered as a province of India when Britain colonized Burma following a series of invasions, and the British moved population between Burma and East Bengal to meet their labor needs. The period between 1824 and World War II remained critical in the organization of the Rohingya identity. The former date refers to the annexation of the Arakan by the British, while the latter date refers to the expulsion of the British from the Arakan by the Japanese (Ahmed, 2009). In 1942, Japan invaded Burma and Britain retreated, forcing many Rohingyas to flee into East Bengal (Pittaway, 2008). In 1948, when Burma became independent, tensions between the government and the Rohingya escalated. The Burma Socialist Party seized power and dismantled Rohingya social and political organizations in 1962. In 1977, the military registered all citizens prior to a national census, explained later to exclude them, and, as a result, more than 200,000 Rohingyas left for Bangladesh in 1978 alone—known as the first major wave.

The ample powers assigned to a government-controlled “central body” to decide on matters pertaining to citizenship mean that, in practice, the Rohingyas’ entitlement to citizenship will not be recognized. In 1989, color-coded Citizens Scrutiny Cards (CSC) were introduced: pink cards for full citizens, blue for associate citizens, and green for naturalized citizens. However, Rohingyas were not issued with any cards and were told that they do not fall under any of these four colors (Lewa, 2001). These deliberate exclusions had long-standing consequences, which are of varied range from rape, torture, and killings, to extreme psychosocial trauma (Figure 3).

Thus, generally known today, Arakani minorities are susceptible to rape, torture, summary killings, confiscation and destruction of their homes and property, physical abuse, religious persecution, and forced and unpaid labor by the NaSaKa (Refuge, 2000). Against the background of alleged persecution by Myanmar authorities on the basis of religious and ethnic discrimination (Amnesty International, 1997), they took refuge in Cox’s Bazar, the southern part of Bangladesh. Forced migration from Arakan to Bangladesh is not a new



**FIGURE 3** Summary of the Atrocities Afflicted in the Arakan, From 1978 to 1983. *Data source:* Shwe, 1989. (color figure available online)

phenomenon in south and southeast Asian migration history, however, little research attention has so far been accorded to this issue. This article offers an understanding about the long-standing deprivation of Arakani minorities and marginalization in Bangladesh as refugees.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This article explains the exclusionary policies of the Myanmar government, why Arakani Muslim minorities found their ways to Bangladesh where there is no guarantee of a better environment in terms of protection, and what other dynamics of persecutions they experience in their destination. Interviews were conducted with 134 randomly selected refugees by using both closed and open-ended questionnaires. The sample was drawn from Kutupalong and Noyapara camps; 60 and 74 were the distribution, respectively. The questionnaire captured the vulnerabilities they faced in Bangladesh in the refugee camps and the factors that pushed them from Arakan state. For analyzing data, simple descriptive and inferential statistics were employed.

I used the 21,000 refugees remaining (according to the official estimate) in the two camps as the sampling frame to draw the sample size of 134. We used a simple statistical technique where the level of precision was 10, which is why the sample size was less than was expected. After the sample size was determined, the sample fraction (SF) was used to determine the proportional sample size from both the camps. Then, simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

Both descriptive and analytical statistics ( $\chi^2$ ,  $t$  test, multiple regression) have been applied to analyse data to see relationships at various levels with different variables. Simple descriptive statistics have been employed to make a comparison of the composition and present the distribution of respondents according to the selected explanatory variables. I used multivariate regression with a view to validating the descriptive information and to figuring out the most influential variables of what they call persecution in their origin.

In-depth interviewing was selected as a research method due to its emphasis on process, depth, and complexity when explaining phenomena. Some case studies were also done. The open structure of qualitative interviewing allows for unexpected issues to emerge. These relate to the research aims of attempting to gain insights into how refugees make decisions. Qualitative interviewing suited the sensitive nature of the research. Some interviewees were reluctant to talk about their personal experiences and instead preferred to discuss the topics in more general terms.

## FINDINGS

### Dynamics of Persecution and Exclusion

With the central government unable to provide adequately for its large army fleet, surprisingly, they often turned to extortion and theft as well as forced labor<sup>4</sup> (Asia Watch, 1992; HRW, 1997). Hence, soldiers require villagers to provide them with rice and livestock. Extortion generally manifests itself in the confiscation of food and demands for bribes at checkpoints. Rohingyas must routinely pay higher fees for travel than other Burmese. The majority (65%) reported having their property confiscated. In addition, local government authorities force them to provide labor without payment—refusal brings physical threats, abuse, and often death. Evidence shows that children as young as 7 years old are forced to offer labor (HRW, 1999), and that soldiers physically punish them if they are sluggish or cannot keep up.<sup>5</sup>

The enforced unpaid labor includes work in state-run, profit-making industries and construction of “model villages” for non-Muslim migrants in Arakan. In most areas, forced labor is enforced and managed by NaSaKa officers or local PDC members. The village headmen make the list of potential person for forced labor. If a name was not checked off as having attended the work project, the missing person would be detained or fined. The pattern is that one man has to offer forced labor every 2 alternative days. When military personnel grab anyone to go for forced labor, then they have to work 7–15 days and failure to go has a fine of 800 kyat. How are conditions for female Arakanis? Let us hear from one of the victims (my respondent) from her own tongue:

[My] husband has been serving as a captive laborer. In the presence of my mother-in-law and another relative, three soldiers started molesting my breasts. I protested but as a result they undressed me and forced on the floor to rape. I was raped repeatedly at the broad daylight in front of my relatives. Soldiers used to come back to my house on many occasions and raped me and kept doing so for the last 5 years. (AA, 26 years old)

Data demonstrate that the majority (54%) claimed having been forced to provide labor to the military. As part of a hunting drive, the officers visit the villages in the morning and demand a number of laborers. This demand is passed down through village leaders who instruct villagers to report to the work site. Interestingly, wealthier villagers often buy laborers to take their place (HRW, 1999). This practice extends in many parts of Myanmar, especially in ethnic minority states (Rajsoomer, 1999). An overwhelming majority (90%) claimed that their citizenship was denied. A sizeable number, in fact, were not aware of what citizenship was about or like. Rape has been the crudest abusive act perpetrated on this population. About one third (31%) reported that at least one of their family members had been raped by NaSaKa members.

#### CASE 1

AA (34 years old), mother of four children, was the wife of a person of Buthidaung. In February 1992, she was at home with her children, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law (16 years old); her husband had been taken for forced labor. It had been cold, and the family was sitting next to the fire about to get ready for bed at about 9 p.m. They heard the sound of boots and soldiers speaking Burmese outside. When the soldiers forced open the door, the fire lit up her face, and they saw her. First they pulled her up by her arms and her brother tried to stop them. They began beating him while undressing and violently molesting her, though not raping her on the spot. When they dragged her and her brother from the house, the brother was tied up and she was wearing only her earrings. Eight days later, they found her body in the jungle near their house. She appeared to have bled to death from her vagina. About 21 days later, the bodies of her husband and his brother were found dumped in the same area. His genitals had been cut off, his eyes gouged out, both hands cuts off.

#### A Regression Analysis: Persecution Ordered

With a view to validating the descriptive information and to figuring out the most influential variables of what they call persecution in their origin, a

**TABLE 1** Reported Forms of Persecution (Multiple Response)

	<i>f</i>	%
Rape <sup>a</sup>	41	30.60
Threats of killing <sup>a</sup>	34	25.37
Killing <sup>a</sup>	17	12.69
Denial of citizenship	129	96.27
Restricted mobility	131	97.76
Deprivation of education and employment	133	99.25
Confiscation of property	87	64.93
Force labor	72	53.73
Extreme poverty	114	85.07

Source: Survey data 2007.

<sup>a</sup>Question: Were any of your family members a victim?

regression analysis was run. Here, the dependent variable = conditions of persecution.

The independent variables are:

$f_1$  = Extreme poverty

$f_2$  = Life threats or killing

$f_3$  = Forced labor

$f_4$  = Confiscation of property

$f_5$  = Rape or sexual abuse

$f_6$  = Being a minority

$f_7$  = Easy border crossing

$f_8$  = Denial of citizenship

$f_9$  = Physical abuse

$f_{10}$  = Discrimination and human rights violation

$f_{11}$  = Unequal employment opportunity

$f_{12}$  = Restricted mobility

These variables were taken as independent variables assuming that they have influence on the probability of taking refuge. In order to identify the

**TABLE 2** Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Correlation coefficient
Unequal employment opportunity	0.465
Forced labor	0.345
Rape or sexual abuse	0.309
Confiscation of property	0.415
Physical abuse	0.310
Denial of citizenship	0.335
Restricted mobility	0.472
Threat of killing	0.375

Source: Computed from survey data, 2007.

**TABLE 3** Regression Coefficients

Variables	Coefficients	<i>t</i> value	Significance
Constant	-801.021		$p < .000$
Threat of killing	.372	2.43	$p < .004$
Forced labor	.318	3.83	$p < .002$
Rape or sexual abuse	1.468	4.34	$p < .00$
Denial of citizenship	2.345	4.52	$p < .000$
Physical abuse	.385	3.012	$p < .001$

Source: Computed from Survey Data 2007.

variables with high relationship with dependent variable, a correlation analysis was performed. Variables having correlation coefficient smaller than 0.3 or  $R^2 < 0.09$  have been removed from the model to maximize the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The other variables having a correlation coefficient 0.3 and above were entered into a stepwise multiple regression analysis to minimize the number of independent variables and maximize the level of explanation. The following variables have been entered into the analysis. The regression coefficient is presented in the following Table (3). The model comprises five variables. All the variables are significant at 95% confidence level.

$$Y = 801.021 + .372 * f_2 + .318 * f_3 + 1.468 * f_5 + 2.345 * f_8 + .385 * f_9$$

$$R^2 = 0.789$$

The  $R^2$  value of 0.789 indicates that this model can analyze the factors influencing widespread persecution. It is determined by five variables such as threat of killing, forced labor, rape or sexual abuse, denial of citizenship, and physical abuse. The findings illustrate these variables that explain forced conditions of migration well.

## CASE 2

KB (29 years old) from Buthidaung, came to Bangladesh with her six children and her father. The army forced abducted male laborers to destroy their village mosque, and build a Buddhist temple in its place. One afternoon in early December 1991, soldiers announced that all Muslims must leave. Begum and her husband made no preparations to do so as they claimed that they had no place to go. That night, while her husband and children were sleeping under their blankets, seven soldiers kicked down the door of their house. They carried her outside, tore off her clothes, blindfolded her with a rag, and while two or three held her, each of them raped her. At some point during the violence, she was aware of her husband trying to defend her. There were blows, and her husband briefly appeared to escape the group of

soldiers. Two or three of the rapists chased him; he was caught and brought back. Using a long-bladed work knife, the soldiers then hacked him to death, leaving his body in front of Begum. She herself lay on the ground injured and bleeding, and the soldiers said they would return for her.

### Corollaries of Exclusions and Persecutions

Ethnic discrimination continues to be a key human rights problem in the world today facing both minorities. One of the fundamental bedrocks of human rights is the principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Discrimination against the minorities in Myanmar manifested to an extent that exceeds all human right standards. In the Arakan state, the government has continued to perpetrate a number of systematic abuses on them. While there are countless complaints of human right violations, more striking is that the members of the Rohingya minority are denied full rights of citizenship—a fundamental right of all human beings—and exclusion from which makes people stateless (Middleton, 2005). While they have been permitted to reside, most Rohingyas are considered “resident foreigners” but not citizens. Clearly that denying the full citizenship rights<sup>6</sup> place the Rohingyas into vulnerability to abuse (HRW, 1996).

Myanmar deliberately sets difficult criteria for citizenship to go on with their cleansing efforts. Citizens, in Myanmar, are persons who belong to one of the national races<sup>7</sup> or whose ancestors settled in the country before 1823, the beginning of British occupation of Arakan State. In order to be eligible to claim citizenship, a person has to provide evidence that their ancestors settled in Burma before 1823, otherwise they fall into the category of an associate citizen if one grandparent, or pre-1823<sup>8</sup> ancestor, was a citizen of another country. Thus, their Rohingya family who migrated to and settled in Arakan during the British colonial period instantaneously excludes them from citizenship. Rohingyas who cannot provide “conclusive evidence” of their lineage or history of residence find themselves ineligible for any class of citizenship. Persons who have at least one parent holding one of the three types of Burmese citizenship are also eligible. Beyond these two qualifications, the person must be 18 years old, be able to speak one of the national languages well,<sup>9</sup> be of good character, and be of sound mind. The stipulations of the Burma Citizenship Law governing the right to one of the three types of Burmese citizenship effectively deny to the Rohingya the possibility of acquiring a nationality.

In situations of conflict, parts of a state’s territory can exist under the control of rebel factions or be characterized by lawlessness so that the perpetration of human rights abuses goes unchecked. In such scenarios, the source of persecution may be nonstate agents but the state is either unable or unwilling to provide protection so that citizenship is denied, creating the

conditions for outward forced migration (Middleton, 2005). The government has placed boundaries within boundaries for Rohingyas by restricting from traveling within Arakan, to other parts of the country and abroad.<sup>10</sup> The government requires Rohingya villagers to obtain a travel permit from the chairman of the local Peace and Development Council (PDC) to cross township and state boundaries. A valid permit that allows a Rohingya to travel for up to 45 days and a copy must be submitted to authorities upon departure and arrival at the destination. Should a Rohingya want to stay overnight in a village within the township, a similar permit must be procured and then presented to the headmen of the home village and the village visited. A fine of up to 200 kyat (US\$29) and detention is imposed on those violating the requirement. The necessity of documentation has exposed the Rohingya to systemic exploitation by corrupt officials who must routinely be paid bribes to the authorities to obtain travel documents. Similarly, as a consequence of citizenship denial, they are deprived of equal treatment in educational opportunities. The secondary education is reserved only for its citizens, which ultimately limits their access to civil service and to higher ranks in the career hierarchy.

As explained before, according to the gravity model of refugee flows, geographical proximity often determines initial migrations, as refugees either migrate internally or enter into neighboring countries. Though in some cases, social networks can act to determine the destination. However, for the vast majority of the refugees in the world, the destination country is proximate to their country of origin (UNHCR, 2000). Experiences in proximate countries vary but the exclusion from the country of origin is commonly repeated in those refugees tend to be excluded from citizenship rights and is tolerated within the territory (Middleton, 2005).

### CASE 3

YY (33 years old) and his wife, MA (27 years old), left for Bangladesh in February from Buthidaung. One evening at 7:30 p.m. soldiers from the 82nd company based in Thentarang Camp were going house-to-house in Haungdaung, abducting men and women to be taken to the camp. YY was away on a forced labor assignment. MA was dragged from her house, her hands tied behind her. She was tied to a group of about a dozen women, including four or five elderly women. Some of the houses were completely emptied of their inhabitants, and all were tied in groups. The groups were forced to walk all night on rough terrain. Children were crying; the old women were being frequently beaten for not keeping up. By daylight they had reached a hill camp. Upon arrival, the women were separated in order of the level of beauty and age, and the old women and children being made to sit outdoors under armed guard. She was among those taken to

rooms, and raped continuously for 3 or 4 days without rest or sleep. She was never given any water, and only after 2 days was she given some food. She received about a cup of rice, which was not offered again during her stay there. When her husband returned home, neighbors told him that his wife had been taken to Thentarang Camp, and soldiers had said he should see them about the conditions of her release. He then went to the village head, who was a non-Muslim. The village head told him that the price of his wife would be one bottle of wine, one live rooster, and 150 Kyat (US\$22). He sold three of his roosters to obtain enough cash and he arrived with the payment, and she was allowed to go home, but he was kept for 2 more weeks of labor and she had to walk home without him.

### Marginalization of Rohingyas in Bangladesh

The problem of Rohingya refugees has been a serious concern for Bangladesh since 1978. In 1978, the military rulers of Myanmar launched an anti-Rohingya military campaign declaring them as illegal immigrants in their country. In March and April of the same year, when a mass exodus took place from the Arakan region into Bangladesh, the problem caused strong tension in the political relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Since 1996, thousands of Rohingyas both repatriated refugees as well as new arrivals have continued to trickle back from Myanmar into Bangladesh. They have been denied access to the refugee camps and have joined more than 100,000 undocumented Rohingyas living outside the camps, often surviving in extreme poverty in villages or slums around Cox's Bazar and Teknaf. They have become invisible refugees, being labeled as "economic migrants" by the Bangladesh authorities.

Myanmar shares borders with five countries<sup>11</sup> and the net migration rate is  $-1.8$  migrant(s)/1,000 population (2005), and refugees IDP: 600,000–1,000,000, most IDPs are ethnic Karen, Karenni, Shan, and Mon (CIA, 2006). Born out by many studies as mentioned previously, geographical proximity determines initial destination of the refugees irrespective of economic or political conditions. Therefore, though Bangladesh, with the extreme poverty rate declining from 43% in 1991/92 to 34% in 2000, remains a low-income food deficit country (LIFDC), it receives most Arakani refugees (Ullah & Routray, 2003; WFP, 2006), which could in part be explained by the religious resemblance.

In 1977, in order to screen out foreigners and to register citizens, Nagamin census was conducted which resulted in the oppression on the Rohingyas, and as a result 200,000 fled from Myanmar for Bangladesh in 1978 (Couts, 2005). Again, a mass exodus of more than 300,000 Rohingyas fled persecution in the Arakan state—northwestern Myanmar—within 4 months, from December 1991 to March 1992<sup>12</sup> (Asia Watch, 1992; Coutts, 2005; Yozo,

1993). After a series of negotiations between the two governments over 12 years, 226,576 were repatriated. There have not only been episodes of influxes of Rohingyas into Bangladesh, but some Rohingyas returned to Bangladesh after having been repatriated to Myanmar (USCR, 1996). In February 1996, during the repatriation of 23,000 Rohingya refugees, 5,000 entered Bangladesh on similar kind of complaints (International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, 2000; NCGUB, 1999; USCR, 1996). A halt in the exodus does not mean that persecution against them has stopped, rather it continues and they are not often allowed to leave or not allowed ingress. However, about 1,000 Rohingya Muslims entered Bangladesh in just 3 days in April 2009, alleging increased persecution by Myanmar's military junta. They forced them out of homes and threatened to treat them even worse if they returned; one family facing such eviction crossed the Naf River on the border in a small boat with five family members. The eviction of Muslims in Rakhine state increased in the weeks after the (Myanmar) military started clearing space to build an army garrison ("New influx," 2009)

Life as a refugee has uncertainties in the destination country (Fangen, 2006). Refugees are destined in such circumstances to be pushed out from vulnerability to humiliation. The fundamental consideration for a refugee is to have protection after arrival. However, 10 years after they fled their homes they were locked into different predicaments: unwanted in Myanmar, and no longer welcomed in Bangladesh ("At Least Six Burmese," 1992; Coutts, 2005). It is not, though, comparable to the level of their condition between the sides of the Naf. Refugees in proximate countries also fear inadequate security conditions, a threat of deportation, and fear of physical harassment and detention from police and security services (Loescher & Milner, 2004). During the second largest influx after 1978, the government constructed temporary shelters in the Cox's Bazar district Teknaf highways in 1991<sup>13</sup> (Coutts, 2005). As many as 20 camps were set up. However, with the return of the majority, all camps were closed except two: Nayapara camp near Teknaf and Kutupalong camp near Ukhia, giving shelter to the remaining 21,621 refugees.

Refugees left for Bangladesh in search of protection, however, with insufficient support from international organizations including UNHCR, Bangladesh fails to provide sufficient protection as revealed in the study. The average household size in the camp is six to seven persons, however, the dwelling size remains constant regardless of family size. Many refugees modified their units, dividing the 9–10 sq. meter space into two rooms, or extending a veranda into the passageway between sheds. Long bamboo sheds with plastic or aluminum roofing are subdivided into several small compartments containing one living area with an adjacent kitchen area to house a single refugee family (MSF, 2002). In the comparative judgment based on the opinion of the respondents, the condition of the Noyapara camps was a little better than those of Kutupalong.

The UNHCR standard of 15–20 liters of water per person per day is the guideline for emergency operations, and is allocated to serve all purposes, including drinking, bathing, cooking, and washing clothes (MSF, 2002). The operating time of the water taps is 2 hours daily, however it did not remain open long enough; sometimes it remained open less than 2 hours and sometimes it was open for 2 hours but it was not long enough to accommodate all those waiting. Kutupalong camp, in contrast, remains comparatively self-sufficient in terms of water supply, with 41 fully functioning tube wells. The latrine units and bathhouses have not been designated according to sex, and their location and distance has exposed women and children to unsafe situations and compromised their privacy. Chronic malnutrition among them was extremely high at 65.4%. Acute malnutrition was significantly higher in female-headed households. The results of recent nutrition surveys coincided with the study and identified a number of factors contributing to malnutrition, including use of food entitlements as income transfer, unmet nonfood needs (Concern Nutritional Survey, 2001; “Red Cross Chief,” 2001), poor health and hygienic conditions, and reliance on curative rather than on preventive health measures (WFP, 2006). The Government’s Department of Health (DoH), through the Office of the Civil Surgeon provides curative health care for the entire refugee population; however, they were generally dissatisfied with the services provided by the MOH, primarily because of disrespectful behavior of the doctor followed by service charges (MSF, 2002).

An informal primary education program for refugee children started in 2001, in which 5,532 children (2,784 boys and 2,748 girls) are enrolled. While the Rohingyas are not allowed to seek employment beyond the camp, some of them engage in work outside, and many have developed several stalls on roadside, mostly throughout the camps. The Rohingya refugee woman, traditionally restricted to the homestead, is typically consumed with domestic duties such as cooking, childcare, and fetching water. Many young Rohingya females resorted to working in the sex trade for income. But, even for them, the restrictions on movement affect their mental well-being and their quality of life. Along with the governmental restrictions, the refugees belong to a relatively conservative Muslim faith, and their traditions limit women’s scope to engage in activities outside their homes. Nevertheless, the large number of female-headed households (36%) has necessitated easing of these restrictions. Besides, none of the Rohingyas had formal documentation that would entitle them to certain kinds of assistance and protection in Bangladesh. Some of the women sought work for low wages, however it has spurred anti-Rohingya sentiment that has sometimes boiled over into clashes (Lobe, 2000).

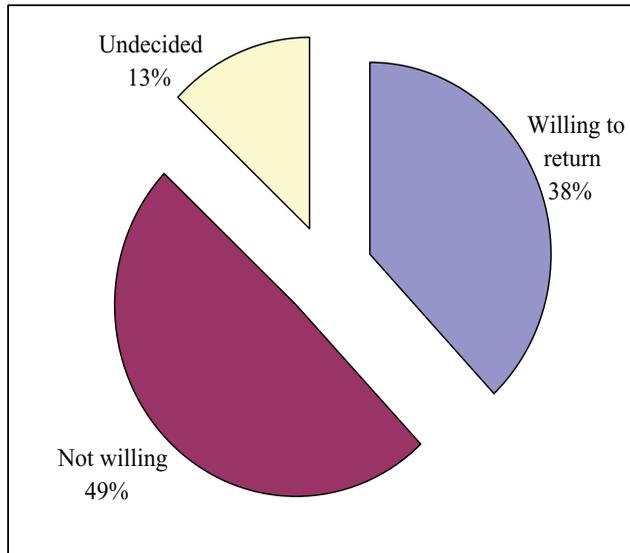
Data show high rates of pregnancy and birth, so much that the number of births has outnumbered the rates of death and repatriation combined in recent years. The average age of marriage is 14 years; average age at first pregnancy is 16 years, and 7%–10% of births result in low birth rate babies. As

**TABLE 4** Reported Quandaries in Camps (Multiple Responses)

	Kutupalong		Noyapara	
	<i>f</i>	% ( <i>n</i> = 60)	<i>f</i>	% ( <i>n</i> = 74)
Poor camp infrastructure	42	70.0	47	63.51
Limited access to education	44	73.31	51	68.92
Limited work opportunity	39	64.98	44	59.46
Limited food availability	29	48.32	41	55.41
Limited mobility	52	86.63	49	66.22
Clashes and police action	33	54.98	24	32.43
Gender issues	31	51.65	19	25.68
Insufficient sanitation and water supply	48	79.97	47	63.51
Poor health and nutrition situation	49	81.64	55	74.32

high as 23% and 29% women, in Nayapara and Kutupalong, respectively, are currently using contraceptives. With the ongoing influx of Rohingyas, many forms of vulnerabilities have been reported, such as arrests, harassment, and overt pushback of apprehended recent arrivals. In the camps, beatings and other physical abuse are commonly used to persuade refugees to voluntarily depart (Minority Rights Group International, 1997). According to the NCGUB (1999),<sup>14</sup> apparently no one volunteered for repatriation, so the authorities picked mostly women and children to send back. Over 100 refugees were detained overnight and the next day, along with 76 others, they were put on boats back to Myanmar (India Abroad, 1997; NCGUB, 1999). In January 1998, armed refugees thought to be Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) members seized the Nayapara camp, and three were killed in a clash between the RSO and Burmese security forces near the Bangladesh border (Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 1999). In the same year, 64 refugees were jailed after clashes with police, because of which part of Kutupalong camp was burned ("Myanmar Refugees Jailed," 1998). Again, 130 were injured (mostly women and children) when the police intervened in a conflict between two rival refugee groups ("100 Hurt," 1998). In one incident, 15 women and young children among a group of 150 Rohingya departees from Myanmar accidentally drowned in the Naf River when they were caught by the Bangladeshi army and summarily pushed back (USCR, 1996).

The study shows that as high as 38%, though reluctantly, expressed intention to return (see Figure 4) though they knew that the conditions in the townships in Arakan had not improved (Tran, 1996; USCR, 1996). During late 1992, the gradual repatriation of the refugees started, followed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the GoB and UNHCR in early 1993.<sup>15</sup> This allowed UNHCR to carry out its mandate and ensure the voluntary nature of the repatriation (Haq, 1999; Silverstein, 1980). Repatriation of the Rohingyas was scheduled to be completed by the end of 1997,



**FIGURE 4** Distribution of the Refugees That Want to Go Back. *Source:* Survey, Data 2003. (color figure available online)

with 21,800 Rohingya remaining in the two camps. When a UNHCR survey revealed that less than 30% of the Rohingya wished to repatriate, however, the Bangladeshi government responded by insisting that all of the Rohingya should return (Lambrecht, 1995; Tony, 1994). The survey shows that from 1996 the flow remained the same until 2004, and almost all of the refugees had been repatriated, although it is believed that a sizeable number of the refugees have been staying away from the camps. Claims are widespread that 100,000–200,000 undocumented Rohingyas are living outside the camps (Couts, 2005).

Generally, the Bangladesh–Myanmar border is porous and smuggling is common: from (Chinese) consumer products to drugs (from the Golden Triangle) and arms, insurgents smuggle to obtain money and arms. Since the situation in Arakan is fundamentally unchanged, a refugee influx is possible at any time.

There is a claim that from border forest camps that the Rohingya Solidarity Alliance (a merger of the RSO and ARIF) prepare for raids into Myanmar. As a matter of fact, the Arakan insurgents—with all the foreign assistance they receive—are the least threatening of all the Myanmar minorities who have taken up arms against the State Peace and Development Council.

Their presence in Bangladesh, as Rahman (2010) claims, has created a security dilemma for the host country. Some refugee organizations depend on arms and drug trafficking for funds while others maintain strong relationships with Islamic extremists. Many, though, tended to refuse this

claim; however, very recently (mid-2010) many of them were arrested in Bangladesh on involvements in drug dealings.

Rohingya receive hardly any protection while in Bangladesh. Most literature dealing with the Rohingya refugee issues consider them humanitarian issues. Rahman (2010) further argued that there are good reasons to regard it as a security concern for Bangladesh. While most studies seek to explain why and how insecurity produces refugees, the opposite process is that refugees produce conflict, dilemma, and insecurity in their host country. The Rohingya crisis is no longer a simple humanitarian tragedy; rather it is a potential threat to Bangladesh's internal stability and a source of interstate tension between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Surprisingly, a number of Arakani refugees who held Bangladeshi passports were arrested at the airport. They are managing to obtain passports from Bangladesh by bribing the corrupt officials.

Lintner (2002, 2009) goes on to say that the *Jemaah Islamiyah*, which is connected to al-Qaeda, hide out in the Rohingya camps, which are, of late, being run by Bangladesh's most extreme Islamic outfit, the *Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami* (HuJI). Rohingya militants collect funds with the help of local and international Islamist parties, and Bangladesh's rightwing party, *Jamaat-i-Islam*, has been known to finance the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (Lintner, 2009).

## DISCUSSIONS

This research has delved into the fact that Arakani minorities have historically been excluded from the mainstream. Exclusions acted as humiliation, which entailed a number of variables such as prejudice, discrimination, stigmatization, derision, and deprivation. Humiliation toward this community reached an extent that it went beyond the level of tolerance. Not that the international community has been unaware of this pattern of systematic brutality, however the tyrannical government never paid any heed to the encouragement from the international community to uphold human rights. Thus, human rights violations continued on the highest magnitude. On the practical side, Bangladesh might not welcome this mass exodus, however it showed respect to the Geneva Convention and tried to provide protection with the assistance of the UNHCR; obviously it was entirely insufficient. This is where the main argument lays—that life before and after was not too much different. However, the exorcism from state-sponsored brutality was their complacency. This means that two distinctive features in Arakan and in Teknaf: in Arakan there is state-sponsored persecution to cleanse ethnic minorities, and in Bangladesh state there is the inability to provide necessary protection.

A number of variables of humiliation and persecution were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Interestingly, findings from both analyses coincided well. Case studies have also supported the argument. Restricted movement has a psychosocial effect on both minors and the adults. That said, a 10-year confinement can have particularly harmful effects on children and youth. Unlike some of the adults, children could not pay their way out of the camp. So for many youngsters, especially those born in the camps (i.e., all those under 10, which account for 39% of the total camp population), the boundaries of the camp are the boundaries of their world. Also, Rohingya men found their social and economic value degraded, and the capacities and potential squandered. This type of restriction is equated with some kind of mental torture. There seems to be no durable solution to the Rohingya refugee problem until Myanmar complies with its obligations under international law and respects the basic rights of its Rohingya minority. The refugee regime offers three durable solutions for refugees: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. The principal objective of each durable solution is to restore national protection to refugees. The suitability and availability of solutions may vary for different groups of refugees or even for refugees within the same population. This population knows that they are not wanted in Bangladesh nor in Myanmar. This study, of course, does not claim to have broken theoretical ground, however, this fills a significant vacuum in the knowledge how this group of population has historically been minoritized in their own land and beyond. There is no denying that they are caught between two lions. While this study, along with many others, talks about the Rohingya refugees from a humanitarian standpoint, growing concerns looming around the issues of national security threats posed by this population should also be taken into consideration.

## NOTES

1. I am aware that this term might not be accepted to many given the history. However, this country is now known as Myanmar.

2. The ethnic composition is: Burman (68%), Shan (9%), Karen (7%), Rakhine (4%), Chinese (3%), Indian (2%), Mon (2%), and other (5%), while the religious cohabitation is: Buddhist (89%), Christian (4%; Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim (4%), animist (1%), and other (2%; CIA, 2006).

3. NLD leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest from 1989 to 1995 and 2000 to 2002, was imprisoned in May 2003 and is currently under house arrest. In November 2005, the junta announced it was extending her detention for at least another 6 months (CIA, 2006).

4. As large as 450,000 (HRW, 1997).

5. ILO banned the Burmese government from participating in its activities or benefiting from its technical assistance until it takes positive action in response to the commission's recommendations (ILO, 1999). These included immediate cessation of the use of forced labor and abrogation of those sections of the Village Act and Towns Act under which it is legally sanctioned.

6. The 1982 Burma Citizenship Law, promulgated not long after the mass return of Rohingya who fled in 1978, distinguishes between three categories of citizenship: citizenship, associate citizenship, and naturalized citizenship. A person is issued a color-coded Citizenship Scrutiny Card consistent with his or her citizenship status—pink, blue, and green respectively (HRW, 1996).

7. Kachin, Kayah, Karenni, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Kaman, or Zerbadee.
8. Human rights organizations ordered the Burmese government to repeal the 1982 Citizenship Law or else amend it in accordance with the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and to grant Rohingya full citizenship and accompanying rights (HRW, 1997). The UN special rapporteur called on the Burmese government to “abolish its burdensome requirements for citizens in a manner which has discriminatory effects on racial or ethnic minorities” (Yokota, 1993, pp. 156–167). Provisions in the 1982 law perpetuate the Rohingya citizenship crisis by denying Burmese citizenship to children born to those considered noncitizens.
9. The Rohingya language, a dialect related to Chittagonian, is not one.
10. It is a well-established principle of international law that any person who is lawfully in the territory of a state should enjoy the right to freedom of movement and residence within that state. This principle is enshrined in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
11. Bangladesh (193 km), China (2,185 km), India (1,463 km), Laos (235 km), and Thailand (1,800 km).
12. The Rohingya Muslims are predominantly concentrated in the northern part of Rakhine State (Arakan), numbering approximately 1.4 million, almost half the state’s total population. During its days as an independent kingdom until 1784, Arakan encompassed at times the Chittagong region in the southern part of today’s Bangladesh (Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland, March 2002, p. 9).
13. Now known as Arakan Road.
14. National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.
15. The GOB and UNHCR have continued negotiations with the GOUM to increase the number of returnees, as well as the frequency of repatriation. In January 2000, the GOUM agreed to accept the repatriation of incomplete families with missing family member(s) on the day of repatriation. However, the implementation of this arrangement has also been ineffective owing to continuing restrictions imposed by the authorities in Myanmar (Yegor, 1972).

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