



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Exclusion of Minority Group through Structural Violence: A Case Study of Rohingya**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Myanmar, a minority community of Muslim Rohingya has been systematically facing the persecution for many years. Following the Ne's Win regime in Myanmar and implementation of the Citizenship Act of 1982, the Rohingya Muslim community experienced social, cultural, and political hardships. Buddhists, the majority group disseminated state-level propaganda against the Rohingya community which resulted in the 1982 Citizenship Act, which essentially institutionalized the violation of the rights of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and therefore continued the structural violence. Despite the gravity of the problem, Myanmar rejects any notion that the government is an oppressor and this refusal to acknowledge the problem has resulted in multi-dimensional conflicts. The Rohingya Muslim population is fleeing to neighboring countries in search of safe sanctuaries, leading to the greatest refugee catastrophe in Asia. Therefore, this descriptive research adopts case study method while using theoretical framework of structural violence to understand the exclusion of Rohingya Muslims in their country and also highlights the implication of refugee crisis for regional politics.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Cleansing, Myanmar, Refugee Crisis, Rohingya, Structural Violence

**Introduction**

According to the UNHCR, the Rohingya are a Muslim minority community in Myanmar who are currently the most persecuted minority in the world. They are a Muslim ethnic group living in a country where Buddhism is the predominant religion. According to the 2014 Fortify Rights Report, they make up about 1.33 million of the nation's total population, which exceeds 50 million people. Despite being an ethnic minority in Myanmar, the Rohingya Muslims are neither accepted as citizens nor as a minority group in that country. However, by definition, a minority is a group that makes up a smaller portion of the population than the entire nation. The group has distinct ethnic, religious, and linguistic traits from the other residents of that state, and they frequently live on the periphery of society (Capotorti, 1979).

Presently, the government of Myanmar recognizes 135 minority groups; the Rohingya Muslims are not on that list and are treated differently from other groups. The Citizenship Act of 1982 did not even recognize the Rohingya Muslims as a minority population. The word "Rohingya" is not recognized by the Burmese authorities, who assert that they should be referred to as 'Bengalis' or 'illegal Bengalis'. The Rohingya are persecuted in Myanmar as a result of pervasive discrimination. Due to their extreme seclusion and external lockdown, the Rohingya are not permitted to receive any form of outside assistance. According to Myanmar, terrorists - specifically, the Rohingya National Army (RNA) and Harakah al Yaqin - are to blame for the lockdown. Both groups had attacked the Myanmar army on several occasions before to the most recent assault (Kipgen, 2018). This lockdown is not just physical but also social. As a result, a large number of Rohingya have either perished or have opted illegal escape to the neighboring countries in South and East Asia.

But neighboring countries are reluctant to welcome them, which has worsened the plight of Rohingya Muslims.

With the passage of time, the ethnic conflict has taken a violent form. (Tom Woodhouse, 2016). To comprehend the dynamics of conflict and its entitlements, one must consider a multitude of factors. Galtung's paradigm, which examines the relationship between conflict, violence, and peace, is among the most influential. Galtung's concept introduces the phrase "structural violence" in addition to offering a vivid framework of conflict and violence. Galtung claims that there are three different types of violence: structural, cultural, and direct. The theory of structural violence states that violence occurs when people are abused and deprived of their fundamental rights due to societal structures and institutions. Direct violence occurs when the actors and objects are easily identified whereas the cultural violence occurs when structural violence is legitimized by means of cultural ties (HO, 2007). Understanding the model, conflict always consists of three elements: attitude; which refers to the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of one another, and behavior; which can be either cooperative or coercive and can be interpreted as a gesture of either conciliation or hostility and contradictions, which include actual or "perceived" thoughts of conflicting parties' goals that are incompatible with one another. This conflict leads to structural violence when a regime deny its agencies their fundamental rights because, in Galtung's view, preventable violence results from self-serving desires and a lack of will.

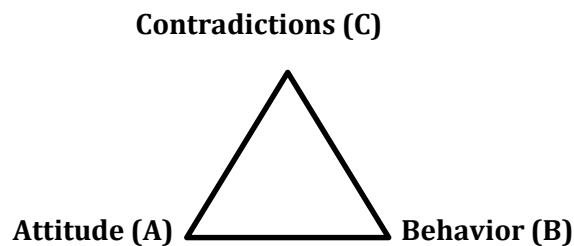


Figure 1 Galtung's Models of Conflict

Source: Adapted from "Contemporary Conflict Resolution", by Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T. & Miall, H. (2016), 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, John Wiley & Sons, pg. 9-18.

The conflict between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Burma began in 1962 when General Ne Win used a military junta to seize power and instilled fear of the Rohingya Muslims among Buddhists. The circumstances that led to the violence began when Rohingya Muslims were denied their fundamental rights as citizens because of what was thought to be an Islamist terror. While there are always two attitudes in a conflict, the attitudes of the government and the Rohingya people are quite different in the Rohingya conflict. The Rohingya responded to the government's discriminatory policies, which sparked the conflict, by using "terrorist" groups for self-defense. When Rohingya Islamist organizations formed in the 1970s and the Burmese government launched Operation King Dragon in reprisal, hundreds of Rohingya were killed, the attitudes of both parties deteriorated. According to UNHCR, the Rohingya are the most persecuted group of the twenty-first century due to the actions of the Burmese government and Buddhists, while the conflict itself has taken place in areas designated as sites of genocide. Contrary to what Galtung anticipated in 1969, the violence against the Rohingya has shifted from personal to structural (Ho, 2007). In the modern world, fear, wrath, hatred, and misguided stereotypes drive a social structure to commit acts of violence against a certain group of people.

While the Buddhist government of Myanmar refuses to grant citizenship to Rohingya Muslims until they give up their religious convictions or forsake their "Muslim" ancestry while the Rohingya Muslims refuse to label themselves "illegal Bengalis" or distance themselves from their origins in order to obtain citizenship in Myanmar. The Buddhist

government's stance is motivated by a concern that if Rohingya Muslims stick to their Islamic beliefs and are recognized as citizens of Myanmar, Myanmar may eventually become an Islamic state as well (Chia J. , 2016).

Since the Rohingya Crisis became well known in 2015, the UN has attempted to find a solution through UNHCR. But when Myanmar began violating human rights, the situation quickly became concerning. The UNHCR attempted to intervene through foreign aid and nongovernmental organizations, but the Burmese government has refused to let any form of assistance reach the Rohingya Muslims and has even requested permission to withdraw from the international community (Chalermphanupap, 2016). The following section will deal with research questions and corresponding objectives of this study.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study adopts Galtung's Theory of Structural violence to explain case study. Three main categories of violence are included in the explanation of the Violence Triangle: structural, cultural, and direct violence. Based on the characteristics of the perpetrators and victims in each category, the typologies were separated. For example, direct violence entails the victim and the culprit being directly involved, but in some cases the victim is also a community with different ideals, values, and morals from the culprits, and the culprit is not an individual but rather a group of individuals or institutions. According to the relationship between the typologies, structural violence is at the top of the triangle since direct violence is the beginning of any act of violence that occurs in the world, and cultural violence is typically used to justify structural violence (Galtung j. , 1969)

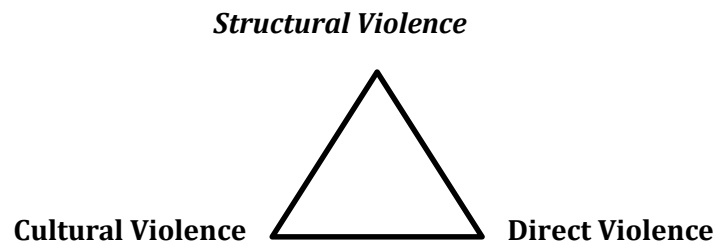


Figure 2 Galtung's Model of Violence Typology

Source: taken from "Contemporary Conflict Resolution", by Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T. & Miall, H. (2016), 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, John Wiley & Sons, pg. 9-18.

### **Direct Violence**

Although there are various ways to use direct violence, the traditional ones include murder, torture, sexual assault, rape and war. It can also take the shape of verbal abuse or any other form of violence that is visible and that can be experienced physically. Physical violence serves as the foundation for structural and cultural violence. However, direct aggression does not inevitably result in the loss of basic human necessities, which further prevents or hinders people from realizing their full potential. The direct violence leads to other types of violence, creating a vicious cycle of violence that continues into the twenty-first century (Ho, 2007).

### **Cultural Violence**

Cultural violence explains the prevailing attitudes and ideas that support and legitimize structural violence, giving it a normal and justified appearance. Put simply, cultural violence is the culmination of the dominant attitudes and ideas that are instilled in people from an early age and those that subsequently permeate in societal thoughts, emphasizing the need for violence to get power (Jones, 2015). The views of people about

other people and the wider world are ultimately shaped by the sense of superiority and dependence that is ingrained in any specific group of people from an early age and is connected to class, sex, religion, and nationality. Furthermore, people frequently have a tendency to hold their opinions so firmly that it leads to extremism in a variety of phenomena (Lowenstein, 2015).

### **Structural Violence**

On the other side, structural violence is the willful violation of an individual's fundamental rights. When a social and political institutions intentionally deny the rights of a particular set of individuals for minimal or nonexistent reasons, it is known as structural violence. As a result, structural violence is the most prevalent type of violation that is observed in global communities. Structural violence is defined as the unfairness and exploitation caused by social and political structures that prevent everyone from realizing their full potential as human beings and instead make a few wealthy and many poor. The institutionalization of some groups in the fields of education, resources, and occasional respect results from the discriminatory privilege of certain classes, races, genders, or even countries over other groups for similar typologies. Put simply, capitalism, fanaticism, patriarchy, and nationalism are all rooted in structural violence (Hathaway, 2013).

### **Examining the Methods of Violence**

The characteristics of the perpetrator and victims would be used to distinguish between these tactics. For example, direct violence usually has a single or small group of people clearly accountable for the violence. Myanmar's Military Junta of 1962, for instance served as real-world example of direct violence since the military and victims of forced labor, torture, and rape, respectively, were easily recognizable actors and objects. While structural violence hides the individual footprints, cultural norms justify their actions, and both types of violence have an invisible spectrum where it is known that a group or individuals are victimized but the culprit is cultural entity or institutions, respectively. This ambiguity allows states to commit state crimes. For example, the state of affairs in Myanmar illustrates the unfairness that exists there as a result of systemic and cultural violence. Because radical Buddhists target not just the Muslim people but also its institutions, like mosques and schools. While "the cultural and religious protectors" of Buddhism walk freely despite their war crimes, the state's military-controlled government neither denounces the act nor offers protection to the Muslim victims (Barany, 2017).

### **Rohingya Muslims**

The Rohingya Muslim minority has been residing in Rakhine State, in the northwest of Myanmar. Since 1974, the state has refused to recognize the Rohingya as citizens since the Ne Win government refused to grant them citizenship. Since then, the Myanmar government and its army have mistreated them and violated their rights. The brutality against the Rohingya in their own country forced them to migrate to Bangladesh via the junction of the Naf and the rivers. There were between 200,000 and 250,000 Rohingya evacuees in 1978, and approximately 250,000 in 1991.

The UNHCR, and the governments of the two states generally made concessions to the exile in order to resolve the departures (Faye, 2021). The Muslim Rohingya population is the most persecuted group globally and are known as 'text book example of ethnic cleansing'. The Rohingya Muslims have turned out to be stateless nation since neither their home country nor any of the countries that have been the host to refugees are willing to offer the status of citizenship or grant them any type of identification or rights. Galtung's theory of structural violence holds that when social institutions fail to acknowledge or embrace a particular group, their fundamental rights are subsequently violated. In light of

this, structural violence occurs in Myanmar. The reasons of structural violence have roots in history that need to be discussed in order to fully grasp the issue.

### **Political Base of the Rohingya Muslims**

Prior to 1962, the Rohingya were citizens of Myanmar and held prominent positions in state organizations such as the Parliament. By the latter half of the 20th century, Rohingya administrators were chosen to serve in Myanmar's parliaments. Between 1948 and 1962, while Myanmar was governed democratically, the language of the Rohingya Muslims was used for both live television broadcasts and parliament sessions where Rohingya lawmakers spoke in their own local language. Prior to the military junta, Rohingya Muslims were allowed to vote and compete for positions in institutions of decision making through democratic elections. They could be significant players in many spheres, be it social, political, or economic. The political rights of the Rohingya Muslims were gradually withdrawn since the military takeover in 1962 (Aljezeera, 2017).

### **Rise of Buddhist Nationalism**

The Rohingya Muslims' situation began to deteriorate when the national movement in Myanmar organized protests. Eventually, these rallies received backing from ethnic Buddhist groups, and they began to lose their status as citizens of Myanmar. An uprising occurred against the government of Myanmar, in which some Rohingya were involved. However, religious scholars denounced the Rohingya for their participation in the rebellion, citing incorrect explanations. In order to stop future conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists, the rebels insisted on maintaining their identity and demanding recognition as citizens of Myanmar. They even asked to be granted their own state. In order to make their presence felt, the Rohingya also demanded freedom of speech, the right to travel, participation in the state economy, and access to higher education. However, as the negotiations with the government failed, the rebels attacked and expelled the Buddhist residents of Rakhine State. The Myanmar army responded by attacking the locations owned by Muslims (Rohingya Briefing Report, 2015).

Between the Buddhists and the Rohingya, there existed a deep-seated mistrust at the end of the fighting in the decade of 1960's. When the military takeover began in the area, the Rohingya meager power came to an end. The Rohingya people in Rakhine State began to experience disruptions in their life due to military actions, which led to a large-scale exodus of Rohingya from Myanmar into neighboring countries.

### **Rohingyas Muslims during Ne Win Rule**

General Ne Win overthrew the democratically elected government of Myanmar in March 1962 and promptly institutionalized anti-Muslim policies. The military coup in Myanmar laid the foundation of the country's 60-year military rule. As General Ne Win considered the Muslim minority group to be a threat to Buddhist identity of Myanmar, the Rohingya Muslims' circumstances worsened over the course of nearly 60 years. The government took away Muslim-owned enterprises, gang rapes and kidnappings of Rohingya Muslims became commonplace, and the lives of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar became increasingly harsh (Ullah A. A., 2016). Ne Win initiated the methodical expulsion of Muslims from Myanmar. The first target was the religion as the military forbade the Rohingya from practicing their faith. Ne Win incited anti-Muslim sentiments among the populace, and as a result, the state could no longer accept the historical ties of Rohingya to state as citizens. Ne Win began Myanmar's transition to socialism by embracing the socialist system. Ne Win's policies resulted in the isolation of Myanmar from the outside world and the gradual bankruptcies of the government. In 1974, Ne Win conducted multiple operations to drive out the Rohingya from Myanmar. One of the operations carried out against the Rohingya was the Sabe Operation, which resulted in the forcible removal of the national registration cards

belonging to the Muslim Rohingya population. Loss of identity cards resulted in were never given classification as illegal immigrants. Students staged protests in 1975, 1976, and 1977, most of which were put down by force and bloodshed (Barry, 2019).

### **Increase in intensity of Violence Against Rohingya Muslims**

After numerous deaths in fights between the Buddhists and Rohingya, the Rakhine state ultimately realized that cooperation between the two groups was necessary to overthrow the state's military authority. In 1967, alliances were forged between the Rakhine National Party and the Rohingya. The military regime was worried by their cooperation. In an effort to stop any kind of assault on its position, General Ne Win attacked the alliance's soldiers, killing 300 men - mostly Muslims - among them, including the head of Rakhine State (Marston, 2019).

Approximately 3500 Muslims were hanged at the borders of the Naf River when the soldiers repelled another attack on them. The government of Bangladesh voiced opposition to the military's actions and called for negotiations between the two governments, but these failed to produce any fruitful outcomes. The government once more initiated the Operation Dragon King, officially known as 'Operation Nagamin' to drive out the illegal immigrants and Rohingya from the area. As a result, many Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in order to avoid being raped, kidnapped, and mistreated by the military. The international community put tremendous pressure on Myanmar to return the Rohingya who had fled to Bangladesh. However, in 1982, the Citizenship Act was passed by the government, which then employed legal means to drive the Rohingya out of Myanmar. As a result, the Rohingya Muslims who had very little rights and advantages were deemed illegal immigrants (Ullah A. , 2016).

### **1982 Citizenship Act and effect on Rohingya's Status**

The democratic administration that held power prior to the military regime acknowledged the citizenship of Rohingya Muslims ever since Myanmar gained its independence. Additionally, as a result of limitations placed on them by military authority during the military takeover, the situation for the Rohingya Muslims deteriorated. After the Citizenship Act of 1982, which declared the Rohingya to be stateless, things got worse. The legislation essentially separated Myanmar's population into three citizenship classifications: naturalized, associate, and citizenship. (Watch, 2000). . Following table 1.1 explains the typology.

**Table 1**  
**Citizenship Typology**

<b>Types of Citizenship</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Citizens	These are the people who are the direct descendants of residents who used to live in Myanmar or were born in the families especially to parents who were citizens at the time of birth before the 19 <sup>th</sup> century.
Associate Citizens	The people who gained nationality through the Citizenship Law of 1948.
Naturalized Citizens	These are the people who used to live in Myanmar before the 1948 Citizenship Law and applied for citizenship after 1982 Act of Citizenship

The Rohingya Muslims were accused of not falling into any of the three categories listed in the Citizenship Act, and they were also refused access to any rights granted to the other legally recognized citizens of Myanmar. Despite the fact that the Rohingya Muslims have been in the area since the eighth century, the law did not acknowledge them as a legitimate ethnic group in Myanmar. The Rohingya were not deemed to qualify to be

assessed as belonging to any category of citizenship because they lacked the means to prove their historical presence in Myanmar through any of the legal documents. Due to their previous status, Rohingya were also subjected to restrictions on their freedom of movement and were unable to obtain employment and education opportunities (Mohajan, 2018).

Ever since the Act of 1982 resulted in the Rohingya Muslims losing their citizenship, they have faced persecution and oppression in terms of denial of basic social rights. The Rohingya Muslims are now the target of the Myanmar army, which has been torturing, raping, and kidnapping them in addition to demolishing their homes and taking their land. Despite the fact that they have not committed any crimes, a large number of Muslims have been detained and executed. Due to the army's destruction of mosques and other places of worship, the Rohingya Muslims have not even been permitted to practice their religion since the 1980s. There are other parties involved in further complicating matters for the Muslims of the Rohingya community than the Myanmar army. In the 1990s, the government implemented many discriminatory policies aimed at decreasing the Rohingya Muslim population in Rakhine. The Rohingya people have been denied certain rights; they are not even allowed to be married without the approval of the Myanmar government and a marriage permit (Myanmar, 2019). In 2012, the hostilities between Rakhine State Muslims and hardline Buddhists reached a breaking point, the Rohingya Muslims were forced to leave Myanmar by whatever means necessary. Without any intervention from the state to bring about peace, the violence between the two communities stayed constant in its intensity. Nonetheless, there was discussion throughout the 2015 election on how a new democratic government would aid in resolving the Rohingya issue. In 2016, the conflict that was a backdrop during the elections intensified once more, leading to the ethnic cleansing of Muslims.

As the Buddhists are afraid that Muslims would eventually replace them as the dominant religion, relations between Muslims and Buddhists have never been good. However, things got worse when a woman from Rakhine was died after being raped. Following the conviction of three Muslim men for the event, a Rakhine crowd stormed a Muslim bus, killing ten of the men inside as payback. A series of incidents involving the two ethnic groups began as a result. Muslims suffered higher losses from the attacks than Buddhists did, with some 90,000 Muslims being displaced and many more died (Chia J. , 2016).

The violence directed at the Rohingya has extended to multiple cities in Myanmar, leading to the increasing marginalization of other ethnic groups and the segregation of various religious groups. About 140,000 Rohingya Muslims in Sittwe live in increasingly difficult conditions as a result of the army's assault against them in the region. The Rohingya residing in Sittwe have also had their businesses and lands seized by the army. This demonstrates that the army and government both commit acts of brutality against Rohingya Muslims living in any town in Myanmar. False accusations against the Rohingya have caused small-scale riots to turn into widespread community violence. Any allegations that the Myanmar army has been violent against the Rohingya Muslims have been refuted. The government attempts to refute all of the accusations made against it by claiming that it has participated in efforts to eradicate terrorism from Myanmar and that the Rohingya Muslims are responsible for all incidents, such as the one on October 9, 2016, in which nine police officers were killed and the Rohingya were accused of being the assassins. Thus, efforts are being made to rid Myanmar of the violent Rohingya Muslims in order to stop such atrocities from happening again (Klinken, 2017).

### **Structural Violence and Rohingya Muslim**

The Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar has been subjected to many sorts of violence over the years. The main cause of this centuries-old rivalry is the Buddhist and Islamic communities' mutual mistrust and phobia. But now, the struggle between the

Rohingya Muslims and the state has beyond religious antagonism and has become an ethnic conflict that threatens human rights through state-run institutions. A transgression that theoretically is referred to as structural violence (Galtung, 1969).

Nonetheless, three typologies of violence - each distinct from the others but equally accountable for the others - are distinguished by structural violence theory. Direct violence is always carried out by direct confrontation and is motivated by a person's innate craving for vengeance as well as feelings of rage and hatred. In contrast, cultural violence is rooted in nationalism and religion and enables people to bind others to themselves under the facade of religious protection. The Rohingya situation is, of course, rooted in Buddhists' hatred and animosity toward Muslims, whom the former consider to be threats to both their nation and faith. This animosity resulted in numerous violent outbursts from each group, with Rohingya Muslims consistently becoming the targets of violence. Human rights violations and cultural discrimination are the root causes of this violence against the Rohingya. However, this conflict has become an example of structural violence due to the Myanmar government's bias and plans for genocidal action against the Rohingya.

### **Application of Galtung's Theory of Violence on Rohingya Muslims**

As the Rohingya Muslims are a Muslim minority population in the country that is not recognized by its government, they have been subjected to war crimes in their own territory, including murder, rape, raids, psychological abuse, and ethnic cleansing. Ironically, despite being the largest and most established minority group in Myanmar, Rohingya Muslims continue to be the victims of war crimes carried out by extreme Buddhists who see Rohingya Muslims as a threat to both the Buddhist community and the country's stability and prosperity. Galtung's theory of violence is well exemplified by the Rohingya Muslim population, as the Rohingya crisis has provided real-world examples of all three types of violence Galtung has identified. Instances of direct violence to be analyzed are the individual acts of rape, head-cutting, parades of nude Rohingya women around the village, and group killings of men in circles - all of which are experienced by Rohingya Muslims. Cultural violence is exemplified by the burning of Rohingya villages, the plundering of mosques and Islamic schools within and outside of Rohingya villages, and the prohibition of Muslim schools throughout Myanmar. Finally, institutional violence is demonstrated by the Burmese government's role in supporting Buddhist extremists and by the social and constitutional limitations the government imposes on the Rohingya minority.

### **Cultural Aspects of Violence**

The Rohingya have experienced bloodshed over the last forty years as a result of discriminatory and repressive laws that have denied them citizenship and made them illegal immigrants in a country they rightfully claim as their own. Rakhine is one of the least developed regions of the state; according to the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (2010), it ranks second in terms of overall poverty in Myanmar, and its citizens generally have limited access to jobs and basic amenities. Conditions for the Muslims of the Rohingya community are significantly worse. They are forced to comply with onerous obligations that make daily living miserable, in addition to being left powerless to assert any rights against the Myanmar government due to their lack of citizenship. Everyone in Myanmar is constantly reminded that the Rohingya people are outsiders and have no place in the country due to the tight regulations placed on every area of their lives, including work, travel, marriage, and family life (Hossain, 2021).

The mindset has permeated Myanmar society and become a part of the societal system. It exacerbates the cultural tension between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. Buddhists have been attacking Muslim schools and holy sites in an effort to upend Rohingya Muslims' social order. Violence against culture gives violence a legitimacy. Targeting someone or a community because of their culture and religion is a common idea that is



frequently disregarded and is mistakenly considered as showing support for one's own religion. Galtung claims that cultural violence even distorts direct and structural violence to appear as though they are neither right nor wrong depending on your point of view (Hossain, 2017). Some incidents support these facts.

The May 2012 rape of a lady by a group of 3 Muslim men was perceived by the people of Myanmar as a violent incident that was the fault of all Rohingya Muslims, even though in a more stable society it would have been merely considered a criminal act. In Tounqop, Rakhine State, hundreds of Burmese beat ten Muslims to death as a violent form of retaliation. This crime, in which members of the mostly Muslim Rohingya neighborhood set fire to Burmese homes and killed an unspecified number of Burmese, was seen as the final straw in a never-ending string of humiliations and marginalization.

The direct violence stopped in October 2012 after President Thein Sein sent the military to Rakhine State. The violence that broke out on October 21 and 24, 2012, was almost inevitable given the highly charged atmosphere, the institutionalized violence against the Rohingya, and the deep animosity between the Rohingya and the Burmese in Rakhine State. These factors were embedded in both the legal system and Myanmar society as a whole. It became normal for local political and religious figures to make divisive comments against the Rohingya in such a culture.

And that's precisely what occurred in the run-up to the October 2012 violence. In June and October of 2012, political parties in Myanmar, monastic associations in the area, and Burmese civic organizations issued statements in the public sphere and circulated leaflets advocating for the expulsion of the Rohingya from Myanmar. They also urged the populace to socially and economically distance themselves from the Rohingya, refrain from associating with them, and refrain from hiring or doing business with them (Roth, 2013). As Galtung's theory had previously predicted, and specifically aimed at the Rohingya population, cultural violence leads to direct violence and vice versa.

### **Structural Restraints on Rohingya Muslims**

The low socioeconomic position of Rohingya Muslims is one of the main issues in this conflict. The bulk of Rohingya Muslim issues are structural in nature, stemming from the Burmese government's refusal to recognize them as citizens of Myanmar. This has resulted in social, political, and economic violence against Rohingya Muslims, in addition to cultural and religious abuse. The Burmese government in majority of the cases was either silent or was directly involved in the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims. Furthermore, the government deprived the Rohingya Muslims of the citizenship right. The Ne Win government had vanished off all the previous records of citizenship status of Rohingya Muslims. Additionally, for many years, Muslims from the Rohingya community have been subject to limits on their freedom of movement. However, when the fighting intensified in 2012, the restrictions were tightened even more, to the point where merely going to the next hamlet and spending the night required an official permit, which would take days to obtain.

Every day, Muslims from the Rohingya community face violence, rape, forced labor, harassment, home invasions, humiliation, arbitrary arrests, and outright murder. The terrible living circumstances that Rohingya Muslims endured in Myanmar were a flagrant violation of their rights to life, security, and freedom. Living conditions for the Muslim Rohingya population in Myanmar were below the poverty line and they were under total lockdown. This is how the aggressive and self-serving actions of the Myanmar government have resulted in numerous violations of human rights and the deaths of thousands of people. This is because a small community, comprising only 3-4% of the country's overall population, was deemed a threat to the country's 53 million inhabitants (UNHCR, 2017). From a wider angle, nearly all instances of direct or cultural violence are caused by structural violence, the injustice and bias of the government towards Rohingya, respectively. This is

also true in terms of the theoretical framework, where all three types of violence are connected in terms of their development into a triangle and a spectrum of visibility and non-visibility, with direct violence located on the triangle's upper peak and in the visible spectrum, and cultural and structural violence situated on the lower peaks and submerged in the non-visibility spectrum.

### **Regional Impact of the Rohingya Conflict**

Due to Myanmar's shared borders with Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, and Thailand on the West, East, and North, respectively, all of these countries are naturally affected by the Rohingya issue, including Malaysia, which is located across the Andaman Sea, and Indonesia, which is located across the Andaman Sea into the Strait of Malacca. Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia continue to be the most affected by the Rohingya refugee crisis since they have access to Rakhine state, home to the majority of the Rohingya population. Furthermore, because they are denied citizenship and face restrictions on their freedom of movement even within villages, Rohingya are compelled to choose to cross the border illegally using boats in order to escape violations at home (Hossain, 2022).

India's approach to the Rohingya refugee crisis reveals an underlying tension between humanitarian values and security concerns, as it represents a complicated interplay between its international duties and its local political landscape. India is obliged by a number of international human rights standards, notably the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids returning refugees to a location where they fear persecution, even though India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Nonetheless, the Rohingya have been primarily portrayed by the Indian government as a security danger, with links to illegal migration and terrorism serving as justification for harsh actions like detentions and deportations. The securitization of the refugee problem coincides with the emergence of sectarian and nationalist politics in India. (Sandhu & Sebastian, 2022)

Despite major socioeconomic issues, Bangladesh has demonstrated a strong humanitarian commitment in response to the Rohingya crisis. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has been sheltering about a million Rohingyas since 2017, resulting in the creation of the largest refugee camp in the world. Tensions between host communities and a strain on national resources have resulted from this open-door policy. Bangladesh has actively pursued international assistance for a dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar, highlighting the sharing of global responsibilities. But as anger has increased, actions such as moving migrants to Bhashan Char have been launched. Bangladesh continues to handle the problem by striking a balance between its humanitarian responsibilities and its national interests. (Bangladesh - Rohingya Crisis Response Plan 2020, 2023)

### **Conclusion**

A group known as Rohingya Muslims asserts that they have lived in Myanmar since the Arakan Kingdom's rule in the eighth century. However, the majority Buddhist populace of Myanmar believes that the Rohingya Muslims are illegal Bengalis who arrived in their country during colonization as a cheap labor source. As a result, Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims have always been at odds, particularly in Rakhine State, where nearly all of the nation's Rohingya Muslim population resides. The Rohingya Muslim community has been subjected to inhumane violence by both government officials, including the military, and Buddhist extremists. This is because the military of Myanmar still holds sway over the Parliament of the Myanmar government. The Rohingya community is Muslim and shares similarities with Bengalis, who are their neighbors separated only by a small river called the Naf. This, according to Johan Galtung's research since 1969, is referred to as "direct and cultural" and "structural" violence from a theoretical standpoint.

Structural violence is the term for when a group is violently attacked by state-run institutions without any justification. On the other hand, cultural and direct violence refers to the blatant and obvious violation of a community's rights by another community within the same state on the basis of that community's religion, culture, ethnicity, race, or color. Following the 1982 constitution that made Rohingya Muslims stateless within their own nation, the Rohingya Muslims have been fighting against discrimination and violations from the Myanmar military and Buddhist extremists, including acts of direct violence and cultural abuse.

**Recommendations:**

Having discussed the issue in detail, following are some recommendations.

1. The 1982 Citizenship Law needs to be changed, and the Rohingya should to be acknowledged as legitimate citizens of both Myanmar and the Rakhine state.
2. The international community needs to pressurize the Myanmar government. Additionally, the international community must forbid future violations of the civil rights and other rights of Rohingya Muslims.
3. To ensure that the civilian population is protected from violence and that all people within the government's authority, including the Rohingya Muslims, have full protection of their human rights and necessary freedoms as required by international law.

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