

The Current State of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Yan Yun*

Durham University
*15147148453@163.com

ABSTRACT

In 2012 Rohingya in Myanmar were forced to flee their homes as refugees due to violent conflict. The root cause of this violent conflict was long-standing discrimination arising from religious and historical issues. Many of the Rohingya who were forced to flee were women and children who faced very serious challenges, and the need for humanitarian relief seemed even more urgent. And the Rohingya refugees in the camps have an unpredictable course to follow.

Keywords: Rohingya, refugee, women, children

1. INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya living in Myanmar have long been discriminated against and restricted by all parties in Myanmar for historical reasons. Furthermore, relations between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's Rakhine State have long been tense [5]. Moreover, the violent clashes in 2012 were triggered by a series of conflicts and attacks between followers of the two religions. On May 28th, a Rakhine woman was raped and killed by three Muslims. In retaliation for this incident, on June 3, an ethnic Rakhine mob killed 10 Muslims. In 2015, the Burmese military began to retaliate on a larger scale and the Rohingya had to wander around, but neighboring countries were not willing to accept the fleeing Rohingya. In 2016, some Rohingya formed the Rakhine Rohingya Salvation Army and repeatedly attacked the police and military. In August 2017, about 150 extremists launched an attack in Rakhine State and caused multiple casualties. This led to a more severe retaliatory operation by the Myanmar military. A large number of Rohingya have been forced to flee Rakhine State and wander to Southeast Asian countries. Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Rohingya refugees. The influx of refugees has had a significant impact on Bangladesh. At the same time, the living environment of Rohingya refugees has been severely challenged due to violent conflicts. Food, living space, education, etc. are all limited. However, the Rohingya religion of Islam has made life in refugee camps more difficult for women, but has also opened new opportunities for women. Female refugees are much more likely to experience violence, especially sexual and domestic violence. Meanwhile, women refugees have access to education and science and culture in the camps. Furthermore, the development of refugees has a positive direction, but also a negative direction.

2. CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Historical Issues

British colonization of Burma began in 1862, and due to the rising price of rice, colonial powers encouraged migrants from Bangladesh to occupy unoccupied lands in Burma [7]. Since then, some Rohingyas have settled in Rakhine State of Myanmar. However, currently, the Burmese government refuses to recognize the citizenship of Rohingya living in Arakan and Rakhine states[8]. Moreover, Rohingyas are recognized by the Burmese government as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which is also the consensus of many Burmese citizens[5]. Therefore, many Burmese people believe that the Rohingyas are not citizens of Burma and that the Rohingyas also represent a degree of colonial rule. Some Burmese unknowingly take out their hatred of colonial rule on the Rohingyas. This hatred is one of the reasons why the Burmese government, military and many people discriminate against the Rohingyas. The government's refusal to recognize Rohingya citizenship has left the Rohingyas disadvantaged in terms of employment, education and health care. The government has imposed a number of restrictions on the Rohingyas, including not allowing Rohingyas to travel or work abroad without permission. Moreover, Rakhine State is one of the poorest regions in Myanmar due to its long history of discrimination and restrictions[7]. Long-term discrimination, neglect, and poverty have resulted in many of the Rohingyas's needs not being met, and this is one of the reasons for the Rohingyas's dissatisfaction with the Burmese government and military.

3. RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL ISSUES

Myanmar is known to be a country where the majority of people are Buddhist. The Rohingya, however, are of the Islamic faith. Therefore, the religious issues between the Burmese people and the Rohingya cannot be ignored. Moreover, some Rohingya Muslims have become more militant because of the poor living conditions of Rohingya people for a long time. Rohingya Muslims are very easy targets for recruitment by some extremist groups of Islam[8]. Moreover, local Muslim leaders believe that the best way to escape from the Buddhist-dominated political administration is to gain an independent status in the region and make Muslims the majority. However, they are not inclusive of autonomy and cultural expression, and they do not take into account the suggestions of other Muslim communities[6]. The increasingly extreme ideology has affected the psyche of some Rohingya Muslims, making them more militant. These militant Rohingya Muslims have attacked the military and the government, leading the government, and the military to retaliate against them, and this behavior has also caused and exacerbated resentment and discrimination against the Rohingya by many people in Myanmar. In 2012, thousands of Buddhist monks marched in Yangon and Mandalay, joined by many ordinary citizens. The purpose of the marches was to demand that the government expel Rohingya Muslims[8]. There is growing hatred and victimization between the two sides of the religious divide. There are many minorities in Burma, but intra-ethnic conflicts cannot be ignored. The Rohingya are not among the 135 officially recognized nations in Myanmar[8], and the violent clashes of 2012 were sparked by mutual retaliation between the Rakhine and Rohingya communities. The increased national hatred threatens already fragile national relationships.

4. ROHINGYA REFUGEE ISSUES

General Conditions in Refugee Camps

The living conditions in the refugee camps where many Rohingya refugees live after fleeing Rakhine State are worrisome. For example, the sanitation situation in most of the camps is chaotic. Similarly, environmental issues in the camps where Rohingya refugees live are also very bleak, with only one toilet for every thirty-seven people living in camps for homeless Rohingya refugees in Myanmar since 2012 [7]. Poor sanitation conditions have led to increasing rates of illness in the camps. Moreover, many of the Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh are living in unofficial refugee camps. Also, because Bangladesh itself is a low to middle income country, it cannot afford to take care of the camps. In fact, most of Myanmar's neighboring countries are lagging behind in development. Affording the cost of Rohingya

refugees is an unaffordable strain for many neighboring countries. As a result, the living conditions of Rohingya refugees, both inside and outside of Myanmar, are not ideal. Furthermore, some Rohingya refugee camps seem to pose a threat to the surrounding communities. In the previous article, some Rohingya are influenced by extreme thinking and are very prone to act aggressively against others. Rohingya refugees with such extreme thinking threaten the security of the surrounding communities.

5. CRISIS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

First, violent conflict and vagrancy are likely to exacerbate violence against women. Not only is there physical violence against refugee women and children there is also emotional violence. Women in many different refugee camps report very high levels of sexual violence[9]. Incidents of sexual violence have likewise been reported in the camps of Rohingya refugees. Sexual violence against Rohingya female refugees includes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, human trafficking, and marriage[2]. The damage of sexual violence is lifelong for women because the emotional damage of sexual violence cannot be forgotten. Moreover, due to the occurrence of sexual violence such as rape, female refugees are very vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies. However, the religious beliefs of Rohingya make it difficult for Rohingya to accept abortion[2]. Therefore, there may be many children born as a result of sexual violence in refugee camps. Moreover, the medical conditions in some refugee camps are poor. So there are unsafe abortions in the camps[2]. Unsafe abortions can lead to physical harm or possibly death for women. Further, male refugees will beat their wives or female partners as a way to strengthen their position in the family[9]. Because many male refugees have few opportunities to earn money in the camps, leading to a possible change in the power structure of the family that has always been in place. Male refugees may not be able to take leadership positions within their families. As a result, male refugees use violent beatings to continue to control their wives or female partners and maintain their position in the family.

Second, for women in refugee camps, marriage appears to lose the right to self-determination. Child marriage is prevalent among the Rohingya[3]. Raising children becomes a huge burden for refugee families due to the immense economic pressure. Boys may become the workforce in the future to provide economic support to the family, while girls become the sacrifice to relieve the family's economic pressure. This is because dowry and money become a common method of exchanging brides[4]. Refugee families use the girl child in exchange for a dowry and save money on the girl child's upkeep. However, there is no doubt that this practice is harmful to the girl child. Child marriage is likely to lead to tragedy

in the girl's future life, for example, when the girl is married, she is likely to become pregnant at an early age, which is extremely harmful to the woman's body. Also, when there is not enough money for a dowry for a bride, there may be an exchange of marriages between two families[4]. In other words, when a refugee family is unable to pay the dowry required to marry a bride, the refugee family may have another female family member of the family marry a male family member of the bride's family. This phenomenon is heartbreakingly harmful to a woman's freedom to marry.

Third, the physical health of children in refugee camps has taken a serious hit. Refugee children are subjected to a long period of displacement before entering the camps and food and medicine are scarce during this period. As a result, many child refugees arrive at the camps malnourished and affected by infectious diseases[1]. Malnutrition may lead to problems such as stunted growth in children. Moreover, the crowded living conditions and worrying sanitary conditions in the camps have led some child refugees to develop some infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis. Moreover, most Rohingya refugees live in unofficial refugee camps, resulting in poor medical care and a lack of humanitarian assistance. Therefore, child refugees have less access to medical treatment when they are sick in the camps.

Finally, education for Rohingya child refugees is a serious problem. Due to persistent discrimination and unequal distribution of educational resources, 50% of children in the Rohingya community do not have access to preschool and primary education. Therefore, Rohingya children are in the educationally disadvantaged group in Rakhine State. This results in Rohingya children growing into adults with limitations in many areas, such as employment. The result is that Rohingya families and communities are unable to escape from problems such as poverty. Moreover, when Rohingya children become refugee children, it is more difficult for them to receive a systematic and quality education. Because many refugee children are likely to miss out on educational opportunities in their home countries during the long period of displacement, education is rarely continuous for refugees[4]. The prolonged exodus places many constraints on the education of Rohingya children. Moreover, Rohingya child refugees miss out not only on schooling, but also on family education. This is because Rohingya child refugees may be separated from their parents in the process of wandering. Children who lose their parents lose their natural protectors and educators. The separation of Rohingya child refugees from their parents poses additional crises and challenges and the lack of family education may lead to more serious problems in the education of Rohingya child refugees.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Positive directions

First of all, many women may have the opportunity to develop better in the refugee camps. In some cultural aspects, women may gain more scientific knowledge in the refugee camps. For example, the definition of menstruation in religion is negative and impure, so Rohingya women are close-mouthed about menstruation. However, volunteers in the camps, members of humanitarian relief organizations and doctors can provide women with correct knowledge about menstruation. This will help Rohingya women to change their traditional mindset and also help their health.◦

Second, some of the Rohingya female refugees felt that they gained new opportunities to participate in skills training and girls' schools in the camps[9]. The Rohingya female refugees who gained knowledge and skills thus have better opportunities for development. They can find a job of their choice and earn a higher salary or choose to continue their education at a higher level. As a result, they can improve their poor living conditions and benefit from the discrimination they face.

7. NEGATIVE DIRECTION

First, Myanmar and neighboring countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, are known to have serious gang and drug problems. Rohingya refugees can easily become gang members or drug traffickers. Because of their immature psychological development and limited education, child refugees are susceptible to the influence of others. Rohingya refugees also have a growing militancy and chronic poverty due to discrimination and other factors. As a result, Rohingya refugees are vulnerable to the chaos of gangs and drugs. The involvement in the gang and drug trade can lead to serious threats to the lives and health of Rohingya refugees, and can further reduce the space for Rohingya refugees to thrive. This could lead to increased discrimination and exclusion of Rohingya refugees by society at large.

Second, the health problems of Rohingya child refugees seem to be alleviated to some extent in the camps. This is because there is cleaner drinking water and food in the camps, and more medical resources are available in the camps. However, in reality, the health of refugee children may also be at risk. Due to cultural differences in diet between their country of origin and the receiving country, refugee children are vulnerable to a high-calorie lifestyle that often leads to a decline in their health after they are rescued [1].

Rohingya child refugees may be exposed to the effects of high-calorie dietary cultures in refugee camps, leading to increasing rates of obesity among Rohingya children.

8. CONCLUSION

The Rohingya suffer from a long history of systematic discrimination in the country of Myanmar where they reside, and the Rohingya are often involved in violent conflicts with the government and military. The colonial history of Burma is one of the reasons why the Rohingya are discriminated against by all parties in Burma. Rohingya who followed British colonial rule into Burma were considered illegal immigrants by the Burmese government and people. As a result, the Rohingya are not recognized as nationals by the Burmese government. The Rohingya were subject to very severe restrictions on education, employment and medical care. The issue of religion seems to be another reason for the discrimination against the Rohingya. Unlike the majority of Burmese who are Buddhist, the Rohingya follow Islam. There are few opportunities to reconcile the different religions. And because of the closed nature of Islam, Muslims can rarely accept people of other religions. This has led to significant religious problems in Rakhine State. Rohingya women refugees are very vulnerable to violence, with sexual and domestic violence being a significant problem. Since the employment of male refugees puts the original economic status of male refugees at risk, some male refugees want to rely on violence to maintain their prestige and power in the family. Moreover, the economic problems and religious culture of Rohingya refugees lead to serious problems of child marriage and bride price. Sometimes the marriage of girls is due to bride price. The education and health of refugee children are also of concern to society. The lack of education and the decline in health standards have led to a very difficult road for refugee children to grow up. It is very clear that there are two different directions of development for Rohingya refugees when they enter the camps. The positive development of Rohingya refugees is that Rohingya refugees are more scientific in their thinking and have access to education and skills training. On the other hand, the negative development of Rohingya refugees is that they may be recruited by gangs and drug organizations and become criminal offenders. Also, child refugees are more likely to be obese due to the change in food culture. As a result, the health of refugee children declines.

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