The Role of The United Nations in Handling The Rohingya and Uighur Conflict in 2017-2022

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Abstract. The Rohingya are not recognized as citizens by the Myanmar government, and they are isolated and experience discrimination. As for the Uighur conflict, they are also a minority in China’s Xinjiang region. Human rights violations experienced by the Uighurs were committed by the Chinese government itself, ranging from discrimination, repression, and criminality committed by the Chinese government. The Uighurs were forced to learn communist ideology and renounce Islam. In indoctrinating the Uighurs, the Chinese government imprisoned, tortured, and forced marriage between the Uighurs and the Chinese. The Uighur conflict is also a minority group in China's Xinjiang region. Human rights violations experienced by the Uyghurs were committed by the Chinese government itself, ranging from discrimination, repression, and criminality committed by the Chinese government. The Uyghurs are forced to learn communist ideology and leave Islam. This research is qualitative-descriptive research using library research. The author will collect more data from books, research journals, papers, and online data searches to answer the problem formulation and examine the problems in this research. The results of this study show that the role of the UN in the Rohingya conflict is to send UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to Myanmar and issue two resolutions by the UN Security Council, while the role of the UN in the Uighur conflict is to send representatives from UNHCHR (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) to mediate with the Chinese government, conduct monitoring and protect human rights.

Keywords: Humanity Politics, United Nations, Human Rights Violations, Rohingya, Uighur.

1 Introduction

The humanitarian crisis has become one of the most complex and endless social issues related to human rights, in which there are many human rights violations, cases of violence, and cultural and religious discrimination [1]. One of the international organizations, the United Nations (UN), has a crucial role in maintaining world peace and security [2]. The United Nations aims to establish a mission to maintain world peace and
security in the hope of preventing conflict, assisting parties in conflict, and helping to realize a form of peace as a peacekeeper. The existence of the United Nations creates a condition that allows the survival and continued development of peace between countries.

The two humanitarian conflicts raised in this article are the Rohingya and Uighur conflicts [3]-[5]. The Rohingya conflict is considered a case of the crime of genocide, and the Myanmar government committed many human rights violations against the Rohingya. The Rohingya are not recognized as citizens by the Myanmar government. They were isolated and experienced discrimination, persecution, oppression, rape, and murder, resulting in the Rohingya fleeing to other countries. As for the Uighur conflict, they are also a minority in China's Xinjiang region. Human rights violations experienced by the Uighurs were committed by the Chinese government itself, ranging from discrimination, repression, and criminality committed by the Chinese government. The Uighurs are forced to learn communist ideology and renounce Islam. In indoctrinating the Uighurs, the Chinese government imprisoned, tortured, and forced marriage between the Uighurs and the Chinese [6].

Based on the points described above, the formulation of the problem in this paper is how the role of the UN as an international organization in dealing with the two humanitarian conflicts, the Rohingya Conflict, and the Uighur conflict, which until now has not found a bright spot for the resolution of the two conflicts. This paper also examines the comparative role of the UN in dealing with the two conflicts [7]. This study aims to analyze the role and involvement of the UN in handling the humanitarian crisis conflict experienced by Rohingya and Uighur Muslims who experience ethnic discrimination.

In this research, the author uses two theoretical foundations. The first is role theory; according to Biddle [8] it operates based on the primary assumption that each individual has a role in everyday life. These roles influence how individuals behave and perceive themselves and how others perceive individual behaviour. According to Sarbin and Allen [9], the structural, functional, and organizational versions of role theory refer to the role of behaviour attached to a particular part or position and not the individual's behaviour. Second, humanitarianism takes the form of actively providing humanitarian aid: aid designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and restore and enhance the dignity of individuals. The character of Humanitarian liberalism today is globalization and international responses to various crises and disasters. The basis of humanitarian action is the humanitarian principle that all human beings have the right to be treated humanely and to receive life-saving assistance on a humanitarian basis; all people have the right to receive humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian actors and humanitarian actors have the right to assist wherever it is needed [10].

2 Research Methods

This research is qualitative descriptive research using library research. The author will collect more necessary data from books, research journals, papers, and online data searches to answer the problem formulation and examine the problems in this research.
3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Background of Rohingya and Uighur Conflicts

Myanmar, or Burma, is a republic in Southeast Asia. Until now, Myanmar is still spreading social and political conflicts within its own country. Rohingya is one of the ethnic minorities living in Myanmar. This Muslim ethnicity has received less attention from the state and has even been marginalized. Historically, the ethnic diversity that exists in Myanmar is inseparable from the British occupation in 1824. Britain made Myanmar its colony for over a century by absorbing agricultural products. The British government recruited migrant labor to generate high profits from the land. In the 17th century, this policy resulted in many Rohingya entering Myanmar. According to census data, between 1871 and 1911, Myanmar's population rapidly tripled [11].

The British promised to call the land separated by the Rohingyas "Muslim State Territory" in return for their service in supporting the British. Rohingya Muslims' loyalty was proven at World War II's outbreak. Their support was at odds with Myanmar's nationalist camp that sided with Japan. The British then gave the Rohingya a strategic position in the government structure. The British promised to provide the Rohingya with an autonomous region, but it was not realized directly. The Rohingya demanded independence, but the Myanmar government rejected the proposal. The Myanmar government and the nationalist camp labeled the Rohingya as foreigners because the Rohingya's form of support for Britain became a bad record in Myanmar's struggle for independence. The government also vehemently refused to grant citizenship to the Rohingya. Many believe the Rohingya have significantly benefited from British rule [12].

The assumption that the Rohingya benefited from British rule led to the nationalist and Buddhist movements forming a force that intensified the hatred towards the Rohingya. In 1962, following a military coup, Myanmar's system of government changed to a one-party democracy. This system subverted the previous democratic system of government. The change in the government system clearly did not benefit the Rohingya. Wrong views, such as the non-recognition of citizenship and foreigners, assumed that the Rohingya were dangerous and threatened the national stability built for 60 years. The Myanmar military carried out the oppression of the Rohingya. They committed torture, rape, and murder. Myanmar excluded Rohingya from the political system, such as banning socio-political organizations [12].

The Rohingya are one of the ethnic groups living in Arakan, Northern Myanmar. The Rohingya are treated differently from other ethnicities by the Myanmar junta government. The Myanmar government eliminated the Rohingya from the eight ethnicities regulated in the Burma citizenship law, including Burmans, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Chin, Mon, Arakan, and Shan. Rohingya Muslims have been suffering since 1978 by the Myanmar Junta. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to neighboring countries in dire conditions. They fled to Myanmar's border with India and China. In addition to the Myanmar government intimidating the Rohingya, the Junta also promoted an anti-Islamic movement among the Rakhine Buddhist community and the Myanmar population as part of a campaign against the Rohingya [13],[14].
As for other pressures the Rohingya experienced, including financial aspects, the Rohingya corporations were acquired by the government. In addition, the Rohingya were subjected to forced labor, detained without trial, and physically attacked. From 1991 to 1992, more than 250,000 people attempted to leave Myanmar for Bangladesh [15]. The Rohingya conflict in Myanmar is inseparable from Myanmar's politics. The change of leaders also affected the position of the Rohingya in Myanmar; when Prime Minister U Nu was in power, the Rohingya were recognized by the Myanmar government. The presence of representatives from the Rohingya in the Myanmar parliament evidenced this. Then, when the U Nu government ended and was replaced by the Military Junta regime, the Rohingya were again not recognized in the Myanmar constitution [16].

Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state face systematic abuses that amount to crimes against humanity, such as apartheid, persecution, and deprivation of liberty. The Rohingya are confined to villages and camps with no freedom of movement and are cut off from access to livelihoods, food, education, and adequate health care. The Rohingya are effectively denied citizenship status under Myanmar's 1982 citizenship law, rendering them stateless. In 2017, atrocities were rooted in decades of oppression, discrimination, and state violence. In February 2021, generals plotting atrocities against Rohingya Muslims staged a coup and arrested Myanmar's elected civilian leaders. The military Junta responded to mass protests with a nationwide campaign of mass killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, and indiscriminate attacks [17].

The Uyghurs are one of China's ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region. The majority of the Uyghurs are Muslims, whose population is predominantly Turkic. Xinjiang borders several countries, including Mongolia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and India. The problems in Xinjiang have a long history; from 1940 to 1999, there was a gap between the Han and Uighur ethnicities [6]. The differences between the two ethnicities led to discrimination and unrest. Social jealousy and poverty were exacerbated by the Chinese government's injustice towards the Uyghurs, worsening the conflict. After discovering natural resources and oil in the Xinjiang region, Han ethnicities began exploiting these resources. Due to religious, cultural, and social differences, the influx of Han ethnicity strengthened the already weak relationship between Han ethnicity and Uyghur ethnicity. The repressive actions carried out by the Han ethnic group against the Uyghurs with the support of the Chinese government made the Uyghurs feel marginalized [18].

In 2014, the mass detention of Uyghurs by the Chinese government began. In 2018, these camps increased [19]. In these camps, the Uyghurs are physically and mentally tortured, and their movement and rights as civilians are also restricted. Religious freedom is also a form of discrimination and oppression experienced by the Uyghurs, as the Chinese government restricts the religious activities of the Uyghurs [9]. Since the communist takeover of Xinjiang in 1955, Uyghur Muslims have been subjected to human rights violations such as religious, cultural, and economic discrimination by the Han ethnicity and the Chinese government. In addition, the Chinese government also violates the freedom of speech, assembly, education, and expression. The Uyghurs are deprived of their freedom of speech regarding their conditions in the camps and are restricted from practicing their religious beliefs [10].
The camps are located in western China near the city of Dabancheng. In 2014, China created a campaign called Strike Hard to counter terrorism in Xinjiang. In the campaign, they targeted people and ethnicities who were feared to cause actions that threatened China's security. So, the Chinese government arrested these people and detained them in Uighur camps [4]. In 2014, the peak of human rights violations by the Chinese government, they committed ideological and physical torture, provided political indoctrination, and cultural assimilation of the Uighurs. In October 2018, the anti-extremism regulation was amended to give local governments the authority to establish educational, skills training, and psychological institutions, also known as vocational education centers/concentration camps, which Xinjiang officials carried out in conducting political indoctrination through deprivation of freedom and detention of Uyghur Muslims [11].

In the camps, the Uyghurs are forced to learn Mandarin, sing songs in praise of the Chinese Communist Party, and practice political indoctrination, as well as various human rights violations because the detention of the Uyghurs is not based on law and their movements are strictly restricted. What the Chinese government has done is included in gross human rights violations because they arbitrarily detain, torture, and inhumanely cruelly criminalize in the name of religion, which is a form of action prohibited in jus cogens norms or the basic principles of international law [11].

In 2022, the UN human rights office said that there were likely crimes against humanity in Xinjiang based on the Chinese government's discriminatory detention of ethnic Uighurs. Beijing later dismissed the allegations, calling them disinformation and lies made by anti-Chinese forces. Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Xinjiang raised concerns among human rights organizations and activists. They suspect Beijing wants to reaffirm its policy direction in Xinjiang with a more positive narrative. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, Xinjiang has been heavily surveilled and backed by high technology. It is reported that more than one million Uyghurs are detained in re-education camps. The Chinese government claims that the education and vocational training centers were built to combat extremism and terrorism. However, Beijing has been criticized for trying to erase Uyghur identity and culture in Xinjiang [12].

### 3.2 The UN's Role in the Rohingya and Uighur Conflicts

As an international organization that aims to maintain world peace and security, the UN has a role and authority in handling the Rohingya and Uighur conflicts. The UN has the authority to help protect populations from crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes. The importance of the UN's role and efforts has been mainly in the interest of the Security Council and General Assembly over the years, as world politics have influenced the organization. However, the UN has also experienced many ongoing challenges, from threats to peace and security, human rights violations, underdevelopment, and environmental degradation [8].

The UN owns six principal organs, including the General Assembly, which are divided into several entities focusing on various fields. Regarding the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar, the UN sent UNCHR to help resolve the conflict. UNHCR (United et al. for Refugees), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization...
dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, refugee communities, and stateless people. The UN sent UNHCR to Myanmar as a form of international community attention to the Rohingya conflict. The assistance provided by the UNHCR to the Rohingya ethnicity includes organizing formal education, building refugee camps, and much more. However, the role of UNHCR is only as an auxiliary and temporary. They cannot make up for the policies taken by the Myanmar government [4].

The UN has procedures through resolutions of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. In articles 6 and 8 of the 1945 UN Charter, the UN is responsible for protecting a population from genocide and other crimes against humanity. Institutionally, in the Rohingya case, the UN passed two resolutions. First, the UN Security Council resolution number S/2007/14 on January 12, 2007; second, the UN Human Rights Council resolution related to the fact-finding team on the Rohingya conflict on March 26, 2017. The United States, China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom are the five countries that have veto power in the UN. In the Rohingya conflict, China and Russia have different interests. Both countries reject all UN resolutions that are interventionist, especially military intervention, and both have fundamental reasons for rejecting military intervention. Both countries have long applied the principle of non-intervention, especially in their domestic politics. Neither wants domestic crackdowns interfered with by other countries using the UN. Meanwhile, the United States, Britain, and France have ambitions to block all the influence of authoritarian countries in conflict countries by using military intervention [18].

In the Uyghur conflict, rather than taking law enforcement measures to address human rights violations against the ethnic Uyghurs in China, the United Nations has approached the Chinese government as a mediator. A representative of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, mediated with the Chinese government. China has repeatedly and vehemently denied allegations of human rights violations in the Xinjiang region. Bachelet traveled to China in early 2022 for discussions with senior government officials. Bachelet's report contained direct allegations of human rights abuses based on interviews with 40 people of Uighur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz ethnicity. 26 of them had been detained or worked in facilities in Xinjiang [7].

Some interviewees said they were beaten with sticks while tied to chairs and interrogated. At the same time, water was splashed on their faces, placed in isolation for long periods, subjected to constant surveillance, denied food and sleep, forbidden to speak their language, and forced to sing patriotic songs. Some also cited sexual violence, including rape, sexual humiliation, and forced nudity. The report also criticized the Chinese government's crackdown on ethnic minorities. New rules issued by the Chinese government prohibit wearing headscarves and growing beards, giving Muslim names to their children, and closing restaurants during Ramadan [7].

The UNHCHR made several recommendations to the Chinese government in the report, including releasing arbitrarily detained persons and clarifying the whereabouts of missing persons. It also urged the Chinese government to limit its surveillance, not to violate fundamental rights and freedoms, and to provide reparations for victims. The UNHCHR also called for urgent attention to intergovernmental bodies, the UN human
rights system, and the international community. The Chinese government has said that
the report of the UN investigation distorts Chinese law and policy. Activists and Uy-
ghurs welcomed the report as a symbolic step and a new recognition from the UN of
human rights violations in Xinjiang. Some hope the report will serve as an international
wake-up call [7].

The UN also monitors the Uighur conflict. This monitoring strengthens the state's
responsibility to protect, respect, and uphold human rights. In monitoring, the UN oc-
casionally collects information related to human rights violations in a country/region
and investigates and seeks facts that occur on the ground. The UN has received several
reports related to human rights violations against the Uyghurs, and the UN can use these
reports to enter the Xinjiang region to conduct direct investigations into human rights
violations and conduct a complete assessment of the human rights situation in the re-

In protecting human rights, meetings were held with critical Chinese officials and
interactions with civil society organizations in China. The visit resulted in direct dis-
cussions with senior leaders discussing human rights, expressing concerns, and paving
the way for interaction with China. The efforts made by the UN are included in the
efforts of promoting human rights, which indirectly the UN seeks to promote interna-
tional human rights mechanisms and promote the protection of human rights to the
community through limited dialogues that have been carried out with the Chinese gov-
ernment, civil society, community leaders and Chinese academics for progress in hu-
man rights protection [1].

Systematically, the UN, as an international organization that aims to maintain world
peace and security, has carried out its role in dealing with conflicts of crimes against
humanity; it is just that the efforts that have been made are not optimal because the
evidence until now these two ethnic conflicts still have not found a bright spot. In the
theory of humanitarianism, it is suggested that humanitarian action is to provide active
humanitarian assistance, which includes saving someone's life, alleviating suffering,
and restoring and increasing the dignity of each individual. These actions have been
carried out by UNHCR, which the United Nations sent to assist ethnic Rohingya in

The role of the UN in these two ethnic conflicts is still not maximized in resolving
these two conflicts. The resolutions issued by the UN against the Rohingya conflict are
less effective. The first resolution issued by the UN Security Council, numbered
S/2007/14, was on January 12, 2007; this resolution failed because it did not obtain
agreement from all members of the UN Security Council. In the UN Security Council's
adoption mechanism, a resolution can be accepted and implemented if nine countries
agree. However, with the veto rights of China and Russia as permanent members of the
UN Security Council, the status of this resolution was then blocked [19]. This is because
China and Russia have different interests from the members of the UN Security Coun-
cil; both countries also reject military intervention from the UN Security Council be-
cause they apply the principle of non-intervention. Russia considers that the conflict in
Myanmar is not an international security threat and does not need to be handled by the
UN Security Council.
As for the second resolution, Myanmar rejected the resolution on March 26, 2017. Myanmar broke away from the resolution because it considered that the resolution was not to what happened. The rejection then made the UN Human Rights Council, as part of the subsidiary body of the General Assembly, unable to continue the resolution. Based on the UN Charter Article 1, paragraph 2 point 7, the UN was established not to intervene in the sovereignty of a country, meaning that any resolution can be accepted or rejected by the country concerned. This condition often makes it difficult for the UN to intervene in conflicted countries. In 2005, the UN General Assembly approved a conflict resolution policy called Responsibility to Protect (R2P) to overcome these policy constraints. With this mechanism, the UN no longer views sovereignty rigidly. In order to resolve humanitarian crises, intervention can be carried out as long as it involves the government, that is, the resolution's target. However, the problem with this policy is that decision-making and implementation still depend on UN Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council still needs to manage to issue a resolution to resolve the Rohingya conflict [19].

In the Uighur conflict, the role of the UN has not been maximized. Many reports related to human rights violations received by the UN against ethnic Uighurs, the UN is considered unable to use its power as an international organization with the authority to protect the human rights of an ethnic group. The UN's efforts in monitoring and approaching the Chinese government cannot be said to be a practical step. This is because the reports of human rights violations against the Uyghurs have not decreased and have increased. The monitoring and engagement efforts have made the UN unable to move much in directly reviewing cases of human rights violations. Moreover, a mere warning to the Chinese government will not make the Chinese government easily accept the warning. Furthermore, the UN was also unable to do much when China openly rejected the UN's direct visit to Xinjiang because the actions taken by the Chinese government against ethnic Uighurs were to eliminate existing terrorism [9].

### 4 Conclusion

The existence of an international organization of world peace in handling conflicts of human rights violations is undoubtedly significant in world peace and security. The UN, as an international organization, has carried out its role, aiming to maintain the mission of world peace and security. However, the efforts made are still not optimal in resolving the Rohingya and Uighur conflicts. In both humanitarian conflicts in this study, the Rohingya and Uighur conflicts, the UN has the authority to handle both conflicts. As explained in the preliminary research results in this paper, the UN has sent the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to Myanmar to assist the Rohingya ethnicity. The UN has also issued two resolutions on the Rohingya conflict. As for the Uighur conflict, the UN sent UNHCHR representatives to mediate with the Chinese government, and the UN-monitored and protected human rights in the Uighur conflict. However, all these efforts could not resolve the humanitarian conflict experienced by the two ethnicities. Until now, there has been no good news regarding resolving these two humanitarian conflicts. Of course, to achieve a broader
transformation in the Rohingya and Uighur conflicts, a more substantial commitment is needed from various parties to find solutions to these two humanitarian conflicts.

References


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