The Rohingyas:
From Stateless to Refugee

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'Rohingya,' 'stateless,' and 'refugee' - all are modern concepts, standing not only for *constructions* that are modern but also for the *realities*, arising mainly out of an organization and reproduction of the modern national state. While few will contend the terms 'refugee' and 'stateless,' in fact, their contemporary nomenclatures are now well established (thanks to the 1951 *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and 1954 *Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* as well as 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* respectively), many will question similar assertions with respect to the term 'Rohingya.' There are good reasons for this, and it is precisely this issue that is taken up in this paper. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section will deal with the birth of the stateless Rohingyas, that is, at what moment of time and under what socio-political conditions do we find a distinct and identifiable name – Rohingya - being used by a social group to mark its existence in the state of Burma (now Myanmar). The second and third sections will take up the issue of stateless Rohingyas *becoming* refugees, particularly the factors contributing to their flight to Bangladesh on a massive scale. The second and third sections will reflect on the 1978 and 1991 expulsions respectively. In sum, the paper will consider not only the birth of the Rohingya refugees (how Rohingyas became refugees from a state of being stateless) but also and more importantly how the birth of the stateless Rohingyas as a distinct community led to the birth of being a refugee. The final section is the epilogue.

I

The Politics of Identity:
Arakanese, Rakhine, Rohingya

Identity signifies both power and refuge. While the understanding of identity as power has been sufficiently dealt with in recent times,[1] there have been fewer attempts to see identity from the standpoint of refuge. Indeed, in the case of the Rohingyas the use of the term – Rohingya - is not so much a demonstration of power as it is an act of refuge, although it too is lately seeking 'power' to transform its position of vulnerability and despair. It is important to keep this distinction in mind, lest we succumb to the world-view of the majoritarian community or the state, which sees 'identity formation' more as

a sign of power and a challenge to its existence. There is enough space for shelving differences and having confrontation between communities replaced by a more sanely goal of sharing differences. But first, let me take up the issue of a social group seeking refuge in the word, *Rohingya*, in the Arakan State of Myanmar.

According to the 1997 Statistical Yearbook, published by the Government of Myanmar, the official population of the Arakan or Rakhine State, where most Rohingyas reside, numbered around 2.6 million.[2] In addition to this 2.6 million, another million plus Rohingyas reside in the Rakhine State (2009 UN figure of Rohingya population in the Arakan is 723,000).[3] This would imply that the overall population of the Rakhine State is around 4 to 5 million.[4] In the government circles, however, the Rakhine State is the home of the officially designated majority - the Buddhist Rakhines.[5] The distinction between 'Rohingyas' and 'Rakhines' here is a deliberate one, not so much for the reason of semantics as for the reason of the state.

The word 'Rohingya' is a taboo in the Capital City of Yangon and I would imagine in the rest of Myanmar. In both national (or more appropriately, governmental) and international circles within Myanmar, the word simply does not exist. Even the National Museum in Yangon which has an excellent collection of materials of all sub-nationalities (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. Why this taboo? Why this deliberate attempt to shun and silence the Rohingyas? Before attempting to dwell on this issue, let me first reflect on the origins of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

There are basically two theories. One theory suggests that the Rohingyas are descendents of Moorish, Arab and Persian traders, including Moghul, Turk, Pathan and Bengali soldiers and migrants, who arrived between 9th and 15th centuries, married local women, and settled in the region. Rohingyas are therefore a mixed group of people with many ethnic and racial connections. This position is mainly upheld by the political organizations of the Rohingyas, including scholars sympathetic to their cause.[6]

The second theory, on the other hand, suggests that the Muslim population of the Rakhine State is mostly Bengali migrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, with some Indians coming during the British period. This theory is further premised on the fact that since most of them speak Bengali with a strong 'Chittagong dialect,' they cannot but be illegal immigrants from pre-1971 Bangladesh. The government of Myanmar, including the majority Burman-Buddhist population of the country, subscribes to this position.[7]

There is probably an element of truth in both these theories, but before dwelling on them any further let me reflect on the issue of identification in the Arakan. I shall begin with the conceptualization of Arakan itself. 'Arakan' is a Bengali/Arabic/Portuguese version of the local term 'Rakhine,' which in turn becomes 'Yakhine' in standard Burmese.[8] Critics suspect that the term Arakan/Rakhine has come from the Pali name 'Rakkhapura,' (in Sanskrit, 'Raksapura'), which means the 'Land of Ogres,' a name that was given to

the region by Buddhist missionaries, indeed, with some pejorative, racist intent.[9] But the linguistic content had further transformation. In fact, more interestingly, in Chittagong dialect, Rakhine came to be pronounced as 'Rohong' or 'Rohang' and the people from this land, 'Rohingyas.'[10] The difference between the various terms and the identity arising out of them was not wholly linguistic in nature.

Although for many long years the people of Arakan had been referred to as Rakhines and for reason of local dialect some of them later on referred to as the Rohingyas, it did not take long for the two identities to be politicized, with the Arakanese Buddhists calling themselves 'Rakhines' and the Arakanese Muslims calling themselves 'Rohingyas.' Religion alone, however, cannot be blamed for the refuge sought by the Arakanese Muslims in the term 'Rohingya.' A precise colonial legacy played a critical role in dividing the people of Arakan, indeed, contributing to a gradual refuge of the Arakanese Muslims into a newer identity.

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. In each of these dates, the Arakanese Muslims played out in a way, which only resulted in an increased alienation between them and the Buddhist population of Arakan. Let me explain.

It has been alleged that the British annexed the Rakhine region in 1824 when the Burman military started pushing the Arakanese Muslims further west well inside the British Raj territories.[11] Whatever may have been the real reason, many of the Arakanese Muslims, particularly whose parents or grandparents had previously lived in Burma but left the place on the account of the Burmans conquest of Arakan towards the end of the eighteenth century, returned to the Arakan following its annexation by the British. Put differently, the British annexation of the Arakan encouraged a steady movement of population from the west to the east, that is, from Bengal or India to the Arakan. A testimony of this lies in the fact that the population of Maungdaw Township increased from 18,000 in 1831 to about 100,000 in 1911.

The fate and political position of the Arakanese Muslims otherwise became closely tied up with the British colonial power. Not surprisingly, therefore, that when the Japanese occupied Burma in 1942 and expelled the British from the Arakan, a sizeable section of the Arakanese Muslims fled Burma and the Arakan and took shelter in Bengal. Indeed, it was during this period that the political affiliation of the Arakanese became clear; with the Arakanese Buddhists supporting the Japanese while the Arakanese Muslims supporting the British. Such political affiliation, however, proved fatal for the Arakanese Muslims, who increasingly sought refuge in a newer identity, *Rohingya*, not only to distance themselves from the Arakanese Buddhists but also to cement solidarity within their own ranks to overcome their position of vulnerability and despair. The fatal outcome could not be contained.

According to some scholars favourable to the Myanmar government, the latter cannot be blamed totally for the fate of the Rohingyas. This is because, as it is argued, at the time of Burma's independence, the Rohingyas not only formed their own army but also approached the 'Father of Pakistan,' Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 'asking him to incorporate Northern Arakan into East Pakistan.'[12] The Rohingyas continued with their demands even in the 1950s. The new State of Burma had no other choice but to consider them as non-Burmese and dissidents who were bent on wrecking the territorial integrity of the country. Apart from subscribing to the argument of 'original sin,' such a position is ill disposed towards the task of resolving the issue and overcoming the plight of the Rohingyas. But then, that is not all.

With the possible exception of the pre-military days of early 1960s, the government of Myanmar at every stage of governance and national development has systematically denied providing the Rohingyas some kind of recognition, including the right to acquire citizenship. It may be mentioned that at one point of post-independence history the Rohingyas claim of separate ethnic identity was recognized by the democratic government of Premier U Nu (1948-1958).[13] But subsequent governments denied this and the issue was completely stalled following the military takeover of the country in 1962. The currently practiced Citizenship Law of Myanmar, which incidentally was promulgated in 1982, bears testimony to all this.

The entire population of Myanmar is practically *colour-coded*! Actually, following the launching of the 'Operation *Nagamin*' (Dragon King) in 1977, which continued for over a decade, almost the whole of Myanmar's population was registered and provided with identity cards. These cards are all colour-coded, mainly for the easy identification of the citizenship status of the bearer. Those residing lawfully in Myanmar can now be divided into four colours:

> *Pink*, those who are full citizens;
> *Blue*, those who are associate citizens;
> *Green*, those who are naturalized citizens; and lastly,
> *White* for the foreigners.

The Rohingyas were quickly told that they do not fall under any of these four colours and that no such cards would be issued to them. Instead, a year after the Operation *Nagamin* began (that is, in 1978-1979) a huge number of Rohingyas, totaling around 250,000, was forcibly pushed into Bangladesh. But this was only the first major push in recent times. Another big push took place some 12 years later in 1991. Indeed, with all such pushes, conflict in the Arakan region and also beyond acquired a new dimension, helping in turn to reproduce the dismal state of life and living of the stateless Rohingyas.

II

The First Major Push - 1978

Historically, there has been a steady movement of people from pre-1971 Bangladesh to Myanmar, particularly in the Arakan region. At times, such movements have been

recorded as reasons for the quantum leap in the growth of population in the Arakan, for example, during the British period as indicated above,[14] and then again, much later during the Pakistan period.[15] But more often in the more recent times, this movement has been 'masterminded' by the Myanmarese themselves, primarily to influence local election results.[16] But then, some noticeable changes in the demographic composition in 1963-1964 and again in 1974 created a space for the government to use the issue of *race and religion* to consolidate its declining support. In fact, during these two periods, two censuses were undertaken, both of which revealed that an increasing number of Arakanese (more Buddhists than Muslims) were leaving their ancient Arakan land and settling further eastward, in areas settled by the majoritarian Burmans (like in the areas of Bassein, Pegu, Mandalay, etc.).[17] The government was quick to point out that it was the result of the influx from Bangladesh, and as such, people have to be 'pushed back' from the border areas to make way for those (mainly Buddhist) Arakanese who have settled further east.

Although in the entire matter, the government was selectively targeting the Arakanese Muslims or the Rohingyas, it was not long before that the Arakanese as a whole (both Buddhists and Muslims) realized that such activities were intended to create a wedge between the majority Arakanese Buddhists (now increasingly referred to as Rakhines) and the minority Rohingyas, coming particularly in the wake of an alliance between the two 'religious' communities intended to resist the central government's anti-minority campaign.[18] In fact, the government was particularly wary of the fact that such an alliance would revive the age-old Arakanese freedom movement.

The matter, however, got further complicated (and this probably could be cited as the immediate cause of the 1978 push) when an alleged coup in February 1976, involving members of the Arakanese community (both Buddhists and Muslims), failed to materialize.[19] The government felt that it was set against a well-coordinated plan to unseat it from power, which can only be resisted by counter-insurgency operations against the Rohingyas, particularly those living in the small villages near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, since they are more likely to resort to armed rebellion with tactical and moral support from fellow Muslims across the border. By June 1978, a total of 167,000 stateless Rohingyas were pushed into Bangladesh, transforming the latter for the first time into a refugee-receiving nation.

The pushing-in of the Rohingyas came as a rude shock to Bangladesh, for less than a year before, in July 1977, Ziaur Rahman, then President of Bangladesh, paid an official visit to Myanmar, and no one was then expecting that such a crisis would unfold. To tackle this problem, the Bangladesh government first began to pursue quiet diplomacy, refraining from making the refugee issue international. But not finding any positive response from Yangon, and faced with an unprecedented task of feeding the refugees, the Bangladesh government took the matter to various world bodies, including the UNHCR. At the end, international pressure, particularly those provided by the Muslim countries, forced Myanmar to sign an agreement with Bangladesh in July 1978 to repatriate all the refugees. But this was only the first push.

The Arakanese all along were maintaining that the whole community was suffering as a result of the military regime and Burman domination, and not just the Rohingyas. Table 1 depicting the summary of the atrocities afflicted by the Myanmar military in the Arakan region from 1978 to 1983 somewhat confirms this assertion. A quick calculation reveals that as a result of military atrocities 1725 Rakhine Buddhists were killed compared to 437 Rohingyas. Again, a total number of 2715 Rakhine women were raped compared to 1681 Rohingya women. Moreover, more Buddhist villages were destroyed than Muslim villages. The above figures, therefore, clearly show that, compared to Rohingyas, more Rakhine Buddhists fell victim to the brutality of the Burman-dominated Myanmar military.

Table 1

Summary of the Atrocities Afflicted in the Arakan
(From 1978 to 1983)

Township	Number of men killed	Number of women raped	Number of villages destroyed	Religion
Kyauktaw	1081	891	74	Buddhist
Ponnakyann	363	930	105	Buddhist
Rethedaung	91	340	19	Buddhist
Minbya	135	315	25	Buddhist
Mrohaung	55	239	19	Buddhist
Buthidaung	142	560	6	Muslim
Maungdaw	295	1121	5	Muslim
Total	2162	4396		

Source: Shwe Lu Maung, *Burma: Nationalism and Ideology – An Analysis of Society, Culture and Politics* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1989), pp.63-64.

But then the question remains, why do we see more Rohingyas arriving at the Bangladesh border? The answer to this probably lies in the fact that the Rohingyas, living near the vicinity of Bangladesh territory (incidentally, most Rakhine Buddhists live in the southern part of the Rakhine State), are in a better position to flee to and take refuge in the 'friendly state' right across the border. Moreover, in contrast to the Rohingyas, the Rakhine Buddhists would be hesitant to take shelter in what is otherwise a majoritarian 'Muslim state.' And it is this almost guaranteed sanctuary for the Rohingyas that has now become a serious source of tension in the border region of Bangladesh and Myanmar, a fact well proven in the course of the second major push.

III

The Second Major Push - 1991

The grounds leading to the production of refugees in 1991 are not very different from that of the first push. The only significant development worth keeping in perspective is the democratic movement that has rocked Myanmar since 1988. We need not go into the details of the history of this movement. It may be kept in mind, however, that since the demise of Ne Win's government in 1988, and following the military junta's refusal to hand over power to the popularly elected representatives in September 1990, the military has lost all credibility in the eyes of the majority of the population of Myanmar. But if this has been a positive development, wrecking the apparent but frightful unity of the majority Burman community, it also brought fear amongst the minority communities, particularly in the wake of the failure of the democratic movement and the success of the military in keeping itself in power.

The military regime understood very well that if it is to remain in power, it must not only undertake policies to consolidate its strength within the majority Burman community but must also try to create dissension within the non-Burman communities, which have united considerably during the phase of the democratic movement. To implement its objectives, it resorted back to the policy of using 'race and religion.' This policy had become urgent for the military as it attempted to mend relations with the Buddhist monks, a gesture to compensate for the killing of several monks during anti-government demonstrations in 1990. The targeting of the Rohingyas in November 1991, therefore, fulfilled the double-task of consolidating the Buddhist majority and, at the same time, wrecking the unity of the Arakanese.

The second push saw more refugees flowing than the first one. By April 1992 more than 223,000 refugees left Arakan with still more fleeing the area.[20] In fact, in another six months, the total number of refugees increased to 265,000,[21] almost 100,000 more than the first major push. The higher number of refugees is not the only difference between the two pushes; far more important difference is the border skirmish that took place during the first month of the refugee-flow in 1991,[22] which signaled that the second push was qualitatively different from the first push with critical security implications for Bangladesh.

In fact, the Myanmar military launched its operations against the Arakanese following an agreement with China (1991), under which China agreed to provide $900 million worth of military equipment, including jet fighters, about half of which were to be paid for in rice and wood.[23] Bangladesh, therefore, was dealing with a military regime, which was not only weak domestically, and therefore more desperate in taking 'populist policies' to win over the majority community, but also artificially empowered by the Chinese military hardware. The latter allowed Myanmar to take up a more militant posture, both internally and externally. This scenario made all the difference in the refugee-flow and Bangladesh's dealing with the second push.

Indeed, following the second push, the bulk of the Rohingyas have come to live a difficult life on both sides of the border, an outcome that is largely reproduced by a set of conflicts in the region. In fact, one can divide the dimension of the conflict into three, all contributing to the reproduction of a dismal state of living of the stateless Rohingyas.

The first one relates to the *military intervention* in the Rakhine State, with the avowed intention of reproducing the power of the majoritarian Burmans. It may be noted here that the majoritarian Burmans follow Theraveda Buddhism while the Rakhine Buddhists are mainly followers of the Manayana sect. In this context and also for having separate ethnic identities, the Burman-dominated military in the Rakhine State is at loggerheads not only with the Rohingyas but also with the Rakhine Buddhists. The brutality of the majoritarian Burman military seemed to have fallen on both the ethnic minorities.

This brings us to the second kind of conflict related mainly to the *refugeeization* of the Rohingyas. Two distinct types of conflict could easily be discerned here. One is the conflict between the Rohingya refugees and the local population in the border region. In fact, there has been a marked shift in the attitude of the local population towards the Rohingya refugees, from the time when they first arrived and the way they are looked upon now. The reasons for the change in the attitude of the locals are mostly for the increase in crime rates and increase in the prices of essentials. At times, members of the two communities have clashed, with the police policing the conflict gainfully with increased role and power.

The second conflict in the wake of the refugeeization of the Rohingyas relates to the increased militarization of the pro-Rohingya political fronts (like, Rohingya Solidarity Organization, Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front, etc.). While the activities of the latter have created a militarized situation in the jungle-packed no-man's land along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, the militarization itself has brought about further uncertainty to the repatriation of the Rohingyas and correspondingly to the fate of the stateless Rohingyas within Bangladesh.

The last kind of conflict is the most complex one and is also the least recognized one. This mainly relates to the *not-so-voluntary repatriation* of the Rohingyas. In fact, the repatriation of the Rohingyas is unique on two fronts. Firstly, there has been a subtle change in the UNHCR policy of voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas. This refers to the change in the UNHCR policy, from one of 'individual interviewing' before ascertaining one's repatriation to the promotion of repatriation through 'mass registration.' Critics have already questioned the principle of voluntariness in such repatriation, including the repatriation of the Rohingyas.[24] It is not surprising that given the *involuntary* nature of Rohingya repatriation many of them are found returning and choosing the life of refugee and illegal migrant in Bangladesh. Exodus, return and conflict all are recycled and reproduced once again.

Secondly, and this is more fundamental, the Rohingyas, once pushed out as *stateless* people, are now repatriated also as *stateless* people. No fundamental change has occurred to their life-long condition of forced labour, landlessness, victim of arbitrary taxation and

above all, statelessness in Myanmar. In fact, the resolution of their fundamental problem, that is, not being able to acquire citizenship rights remains stalled and marginal as ever. How did the Myanmar government succeed in keeping the fate of the stateless Rohingyas practically frozen? The question merits close attention.

The Myanmar government needs to be credited for productively utilizing *military intervention* and *dubious trading/investment*;[25] indeed, at a level and with such sophistication that only a few of the developing countries could match. The government knows very well that Myanmar has resources – physical as well as cheap labour - to attract the pacesetters and real gainers of globalization, namely the developed countries. To give one small instance of government's confidence, even after 1990, when the military government refused to accept the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi and hand over power to the elected representatives, more than a dozen petroleum companies undertook exploration in Myanmar.[26] Even with respect to the stateless Rohingyas, the government of Myanmar succeeded in doing the same. The government, in fact, succeeded in attracting developmental funds from the developed countries, including international agencies, by way of agreeing to the repatriation of the Rohingyas without, however, resolving the cause of their plight.

Two issues are critical here. Firstly, the government of Myanmar by letting loose its military in the Arakan, and the subsequent exodus of the Rohingyas, has succeeded in impressing upon the donors that unless the region is developed such conflict and exodus would continue. Can we not dub this as a case where the government is using the military, exodus and repatriation for attracting developmental funds from various sources for the Rakhine State and consequently for the Myanmar military with little or no concern for the *stateless* Rohingyas?

Secondly, since the conflict in the Arakan is limited to the region, the international community, including the oil companies, sees no problem in investing in Myanmar. But then, with the cementing of the relationship between the Myanmar government and the global economy, the stateless Rohingyas end up being doubly marginalized – first, nationally; second, internationally. Indeed, in the wake of the continuing government-international community relationship, not only did the democratization of the country got shelved, with the marginalized suffering the most, but also the problems of the stateless Rohingyas got acute as the most marginalized of the lot. Put differently, the success of the government in keeping afloat its relationship with the international community in the midst of its coercive role against the Rohingyas only helped reproduce the statelessness of the latter in Myanmar.

Nothing can be more unreal than to believe that the Myanmar government would suddenly give in and change the nationality or citizenship laws in favour of the stateless Rohingyas. In fact, with the possible exception of some exile groups,[27] none of the recognized ethnic groups in Myanmar have supported the cause of the stateless Rohingyas. Even Aung San Suu Kyi is surprisingly silent on this issue. The challenge therefore lies in resolving the plight of the stateless Rohingyas with due recognition of their identity and nationality within Myanmar. But if the fate of the Rohingyas in

Myanmar remains painful and uncertain, there is no reason to believe that the Rohingyas would continue to remain docile and silent.

IV

Epilogue

Currently, Bangladesh hosts 27,150[28] officially documented Rohingya refugees, residing in Kutupalong and Nayapara camps in southern Cox's Bazaar. Although all the officially registered Rohingyas from the second push were taken back by the government of Myanmar save 27,150, there are still more than 200,000 Rohingyas living outside the official camps as undocumented refugees. It may be mentioned that the UNHCR and the GOB stopped the official registration of the Rohingya refugees in 1992. Local people claim that almost all the repatriated Rohingyas later came back and started living in and around Chittagong. Some estimates suggest that there are about 300,000 nationals of Myanmar outside the official camps who are illegally staying mostly in areas of Cox's Bazaar, Bandarban, Chittagong and Dhaka. However, accurate statistics for undocumented refugees living in Bangladesh do not exist. Some form of registration ought to be initiated, preferably with civil society or NGO support, for both short- and long-term interests of Bangladesh.

Secondly, *repatriation* of the bulk of the Rohingya refugees in 1978 and again in 1992 only proved that the Rohingyas, while fleeing from Myanmar, are *de facto* residents of Myanmar. A permanent solution of the Rohingyas lies in the Myanmar government recognizing this fact and grating them citizenship.

Thirdly, protracted statelessness and refugeehood can at times turn the victims violent, including some of them ending up in militancy, but this fact alone should not be used to muster support against the hapless Rohingyas internationally in the name of countering 'terrorism' and 'Islamic militancy,' as it is now being done by the military government of Myanmar. This actually amounts to 'blaming the victims,' which is nothing less than inhumane to say the least.

Finally, the changing global context, including China's recent frustration with regimented Myanmar over narco-trading and other illicit activities, provides Bangladesh with an opportunity to raise the Rohingya issue at the global level and seek international support for pressurizing Myanmar to establish a rule of law and grant citizenship to the stateless Rohingyas. Any progress on the latter would not only put an end to the plight of the stateless Rohingyas in Myanmar but would also serve the interests of Myanmar in having the Rohingyas work for the country with zeal both as respected citizens and sons of the soil. Bangladesh and Myanmar would also be suitably placed then to work together regionally as well as globally. A meeting of the stakeholders at the national level is certainly required to first brainstorm and fine tune such an initiative.

Notes & References

[1]See, Sankaran Krishna, *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, et.al., *Ethnic Futures: The State and Identity Politics in Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999); William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[2] This is, however, an estimated figure. See, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, The Government of the Union of Myanmar, *1997 Statistical Yearbook* (Yangon: Central Statistical Organization, 1997), p.22. In 2000 the semi-official estimated population in the Arakan was 2.75 million.

[3] See, Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, 1991), p.30. For the UN figure, see, *The New York Times*, 19 April 2009.

[4] The 5 million figure is cited in Abdur Razzaq and Mahfuzul Haque, *A Tale of Refugees: Rohingyas in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: The Centre for Human Rights, 1995), p.14. See also, Shwe Lu Maung, *Burma: Nationalism and Ideology* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1989), p.4

[5] Martin Smith, *op.cit*.

[6] Abdur Razzaq and Mahfuzul Haque, *op.cit*. See also, Tessa Piper, "Myanmar: Muslims from Rakhine State: Exit and Return," *WRITENET*, Practical Management (UK), December 1993, p.2.

[7] As one governmental press release noted:

> In actual fact, although there are 135 national races in Myanmar today, the so-called Rohingya people are not one of them. Historically, there has never been a 'Rohingya' race in Myanmar. Since the first Anglo-American War in 1824, people of Muslim faith from the adjacent country illegally entered Myanmar Naing-Ngan, particularly Rakhine State. Being illegal immigrants they do not hold immigration papers like other nationals of the country.

See, Press Release from U Ohn Gyaw, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 February 1992.

[8] See, Joe Cummings and Tony Wheeler, *Myanmar: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications, 1996), p.364.

[9] *ibid*.

[10] Abdur Razzaq and Mahfuzul Haque, *op.cit*, p.14.

[11] Joe Cummings and Tony Wheeler, *op.cit*., p.365

[12] Martin Smith, *op.cit*., p.41.

[13] A radio program in 'Rohingya language' was also conducted during this period, but after the 1962 military coup it was stopped. This information is based on the author's discussion with some 'researchers' in Yangon.

[14] See, "Arakan in Historical Perspective," *Bangladesh in International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No.5, May 1978, p.6.

[15] Shwe Lu Maung, *op.cit*., 61.

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[16] *ibid.*

[17] *ibid.*, pp.61-62.

[18] In fact, they joined hands in both the Arakan National United Organization and the Arakan National Liberation Party.

[19] See, Henry W. Degenhardt, *Political Dissent: An International Guide to Dissident, Extra-Parliamentary, Guerrilla and Illegal Political Movements* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983), p.78.

[20] Bangladesh Observer (Dhaka), 29 April 1982.

[21] This figure is based on UNHCR calculations, see *Morning Sun* (Dhaka), 1 May 1993.

[22] In this connection, *Dawn* (Karachi), citing Bangladesh security officials, reported on 3 January 1992:

> Bangladesh military columns headed south to reinforce the frontier with Burma after Rangoon refused to pull back its troops following a border clash.... Burma had already massed over 25,000 regular troops close to the border and is still making further deployments.... Tension has been high along the 270-km border since Burmese forces attacked a camp of the Bangladesh Rifles on December 21, killing one soldier and wounding three.

[23] See, R. Bruce McColm, ed., *Freedom in the World: Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1991-1992* (London: Freedom House, 1992), p.128.

[24] MSF (*Medecins Sans Frontieres*), for instance, noted:

> "In June 1994 the GOB gave permission to the UNHCR to start interviewing in all the camps. UNHCR found out in one test-run camp that 23% of the refugees wanted to be repatriated. In July 1994, UNHCR suddenly changed its policy. The agency changed from information sessions to promotion of repatriation, stating that the situation in Burma is 'conducive for return.' The willingness to repatriate allegedly increased to about 95%. UNHCR also abandoned the system of private interviewing and implemented a system of mass registration for voluntary repatriation….
>
> MSF believes that the repatriation of Rohingyas is not voluntary and that the procedures set by the UNHCR do not guarantee that the refugees are able to take a decision out of free will. MSF is concerned that the UNHCR is trying out a new repatriation policy for countries *where a fundamental change of circumstances has not taken place*. MSF questions if this policy fits the statutory UNHCR-mandate of voluntary repatriation" (emphasis mine).

See, "MSF's concerns on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Burma," MSF, Amsterdam/Paris, 1 May 1995, pp. 2-5.

[25] Myanmar is a major centre for the trading of small arms and illicit drugs. There is huge profit from such trading, some of which are directly linked to the military establishment. Moreover, at times the developmental aid, given by UNDP or some other organizations, is diverted to the development and well-being of the military. Based on author's interview with a cross-section of people in Yangon. See also, Bertil

Lintner and Michael Black, *Merchants of Madness: The Methamphetamine Explosion in the Golden Triangle* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009).

[26]*Asiaweek*, 22 November 1996, p.184.

[27] See, *Burma's Will to Survive: 1992 Annual Report* (Bangkok: Burma Rights Movement for Action, December 1992), pp.42-46.

[28] Based on *UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009*, p. 229. http://www.unhcr.org/home/PUBL/474ac8da11.pdf