



Smoke rises on Myanmar side as Rohingya refugees get off a boat and land in Shah Porir Dwp after crossing into Bangladesh yesterday. Top right, some of the newly arriving refugees receive relief in Ukha's Balukhali and a sick Rohingya girl gets treatment at a temporary medical camp near Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO:
REUTERS, AMRAN HOSSAIN

Shelter for Rohingyas temporary

PM tells French envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh was giving shelter to Myanmar refugees on humanitarian grounds, but not forever.

"We've given shelter to them [Myanmar refugees] on humanitarian grounds, but we cannot keep them here forever," she said when French Ambassador to Bangladesh Sophie Aubert met her at her parliament office.

The PM called upon the international community to mount pressure on Myanmar to take back its nationals.

The current problem in Rakhine, Myanmar cannot be solved through military actions. It can be solved through a political process, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim quoted the premier as saying. He briefed reporters after the meeting.

In Bangladesh, Hasina said, there was problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Bangladesh solved it through talks. "We negotiated with them, settled the matter internally, and then took back our nationals."

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So low, so fast

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stance against hatred, genocide and abuse of human dignity. On September 8 this year, the museum observed "today, these ideals appear absent in the defence of Burma's Rohingya population. We now implore her to ... uphold those very ideals and work to stop the long standing persecution and violence..."

When she was awarded the US Congressional Medal in 2012, influential Republican senator Johan McCain said Suu Kyi was his hero. On September 9 this year he co-introduced a bipartisan resolution in senate on the atrocity of the Rohingya and urged Suu Kyi to "live up to her inspiring words upon receiving the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize with respect to ethnic reconciliation in Burma and in particular to address the historic and brutal repression of the Rohingya in Rakhine state."

South African anti-apartheid leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu was so distraught by Suu Kyi's role in the Rohingya massacre that he wrote an open letter where he said "if the political price of your ascension to the highest office in Myanmar is your silence, the price is surely too steep."

Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has accused Suu Kyi of having "turned her back on democracy once she came to power" and said the

Burmese leader has failed to live up to the prize's ideals.

The youngest Nobel winner, Malala Yousafzai, has condemned Suu Kyi's inaction and said, "Over the last several years, I have repeatedly condemned this tragic and shameful treatment. I am still waiting for my fellow Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to do the same."

A global campaign has begun urging the Nobel Committee to strip the Myanmar leader of her award and more than 400,000 have signed a petition calling for Suu Kyi to be stripped of her award.

Nevertheless, the committee has said it only awards people for the roles and does not revoke for their actions afterwards.

Despite everything, she remains unfeeling and untouched although the Holocaust Memorial Museum says it is now deeply concerned about the "ongoing mass atrocities, including the risk of genocide."

Bangladesh had joined the global voice demanding her release and freedom during her imprisoned days, and rejoiced when she gained votes and acquired her place as leader though denied her rightful place as the head of the government. Today, like the rest of the world's democracy loving people, Bangladesh stands aghast at the role of a once "icon of democracy".

Take back all Rohingyas

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Rohingyas, ensure their safe accommodation and give them citizenship rights.

The resolution was passed in the wake of fresh refugee inflow from Myanmar, triggered by what the UN calls ethnic cleansing being carried out by the Myanmar military in the Rakhine state following insurgent attacks on police posts and an army base on August 25.

Hasina and the other lawmakers made several specific proposals for Myanmar and the international community, including the creation of a "safe zone" in Myanmar for the Rohingyas under UN supervision, and the implementation of the Kofi Annan Commission's recommendations on Rakhine state for a permanent solution to the crisis.

Hasina said, "I have no language to criticise Myanmar ...". She said the Rohingyas had been living there for several decades and a former Myanmar prime minister had admitted that Rohingyas were indeed Myanmar citizens.

"But in 1978, the Myanmar military junta first launched the brutality on the Rohingyas, forcing them to leave their own country. In 2015, the then Myanmar regime took away the Rohingyas right to vote. We don't understand why successive Myanmar regimes carried out such atrocities on a particular community when the country is comprised of different groups."

She said from the very beginning, Bangladesh has been protesting the atrocities against the Rohingyas and has been requesting Myanmar to take them back to their country.

"But paying no heed to our calls, they are sending Rohingyas to Bangladesh afresh ...", she said, adding that the repression on the Rohingyas had reached beyond description this time.

Recalling the atrocities carried out by the Pakistan army on Bangalees,

especially women and children, during the Liberation War in 1971, Hasina said Myanmar was carrying out exactly the same brutality on Rohingyas.

"Women are being raped and tortured, children are being killed, and houses are being set on fire in Rakhine area just like the Pakistan army did in 1971."

Sharing her experience as a refugee abroad, after the murder of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, she said she knew it very well how it feels to be a refugee abroad.

"That's why we are giving shelter to the Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds as we are human beings."

Bangladesh wants friendship with all countries including Myanmar, she said, adding, "I will ask the Myanmar government to think about the consequences of snatching the voting rights and citizenship of the Rohingyas."

Hasina said she had assured Myanmar leaders that her government would not allow anyone to use Bangladesh's territory to carry out insurgency in Myanmar. "We even suggested joint patrols to arrest perpetrators who are carrying out attacks on Myanmar's law enforcement agencies."

Criticising the attackers, she asked why they were giving the Myanmar authorities excuses to launch atrocities on the Rohingyas.

Censuring Myanmar, the PM said, "What is the fault of the children? Why are you killing the children and innocent people for the fault of certain people [who carry out attack]. We cannot accept this."

"Dead bodies of many children like Aylan are lying on the banks of the Naf river," she said in an emotional voice.

Lawmakers' last night came down heavily on Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi for her silence regarding the ongoing brutality on the

Rohingyas and for saying that the world media was lying about the genocide.

Some even called upon the Nobel Committee to withdraw the Nobel Prize awarded to her for her contribution to peace.

Hasina said, "We will have to understand how much power she has at the policy level to run Myanmar."

She warned all not to make political gains or build fortunes using the Rohingya crisis.

Hasina said that Bangladesh would be able to feed and provide shelter to three to five lakh Rohingyas as it can do so for the 16 crore inhabitants of the country.

She welcomed assistance in this regard.

The PM said she would leave on September 16 to attend an UNGA programme where she would raise the issue prominently.

Earlier taking part in the discussion, MPs termed the ongoing brutality on the Rohingyas genocide and urged the international community to file complaints against Myanmar with the international criminal court.

BIOMETRIC REG STARTS
The government yesterday started recording biometric data of Rohingyas as part of its efforts to document refugees entering Bangladesh, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

The Department of Immigration and Passports began the registration at 8:00pm ahead of Hasina's visit to Cox's Bazar today.

Sufia Khatun was the first biometrically registered Rohingya refugee. She was documented at Kutupalong enrolment station.

A total of 17 enrolment stations would be set up and two stations, the other at Balukhali, have already started operating. The government would later distribute IDs to the registered Rohingyas.

Textbook case of ethnic cleansing

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and widespread discrimination against the Rohingya population," Zeid added.

"The situation seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing," said the official, according to a UN press release issued in Geneva yesterday.

The operation, which is ostensibly in reaction to militant attacks against 30 police posts on August 25, is clearly disproportionate and without regard for basic principles of international law, he observed.

"We have received multiple reports and satellite imagery of security forces and local militia burning Rohingya villages, and consistent accounts of extrajudicial killings, including shooting fleeing civilians."

The UN human rights chief cited reports that Myanmar authorities have now begun to lay landmines along the border with Bangladesh.

He said he is appalled to learn of official statements that refugees who have fled the violence will only be allowed back if they can provide "proof of nationality".

This measure resembles a cynical ploy to forcibly transfer large numbers of people without possibility of return, Zeid said, given that successive governments have since 1962 progressively stripped the Rohingya of their political and civil rights, including citizenship rights -- as acknowledged by Suu Kyi's own appointed Rakhine Advisory Commission.

Last year, the UN official added, he warned that the pattern of gross violations of human rights of Rohingyas suggested a widespread or systematic attack against the community, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity, if so established by a court of law.

Turning to the situation in Bangladesh, he said, "In Bangladesh, I encourage the government to maintain open borders for the Rohingya refugees, and I urge the international community's support in helping the authorities receive and better assist the refugee population."

Zeid appreciated Dhaka's constructive engagement with his office, and he would like to continue to work with the authorities to address the range of very serious human rights issues in the

country.

The UN official also said he deplores current measures in India to deport Rohingyas at a time of such violence against them in their country. He mentioned that some 40,000 Rohingyas have settled in India, 16,000 of them received refugee documentation.

Noting New Delhi's obligations under international law, he said: "India cannot carry out collective expulsions, or return people to a place where they risk torture or other serious violations."

'SHOULD REMEMBER BUDDHA'
According to a news report of the Independent, UK, the Dalai Lama, the Buddhist spiritual leader of Tibet, said those carrying out the campaigns against Rohingyas "should remember Buddha".

"I think in such circumstances Buddha would definitely give help to those poor Muslims."

He said he had delivered the message to Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi several years ago at a meeting of Nobel Peace Prize laureates.

While Burmese Buddhists also worship the Buddha, they follow a different religious tradition than Tibetans and do not recognise the Dalai Lama as their spiritual leader, said the report.

"Those people who are sort of harassing some Muslims, they should remember Buddha," the Dalai Lama told journalists who asked him about the crisis on Friday evening, according to the Telegraph.

'ALLOW HUMANITARIAN AID'
Human Rights Watch said yesterday the United Nations, other multilateral organisations, and countries with influence should press the Myanmar government to urgently allow humanitarian aid to reach Rohingyas at risk in Rakhine.

They should also ensure that adequate assistance reaches the more than 3,00,000 Rohingya and other refugees who have recently fled to Bangladesh following the military crackdowns.

"The humanitarian catastrophe that Burma's security forces have created in Rakhine State has been multiplied by the authorities' unwillingness to provide access to

humanitarian agencies," said Philippe Bolopion, deputy director for global advocacy at Human Rights Watch.

"The United Nations, ASEAN, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation need to ramp up the pressure on Burma and provide more assistance to Bangladesh to promptly help Rohingya and other displaced people."

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh told Human Rights Watch that Myanmar's security forces had carried out armed attacks on villagers, inflicting bullet and shrapnel injuries, and burned down their homes.

The killings, shelling, and arson in Rohingya villages have all the hallmarks of a campaign of "ethnic cleansing," Human Rights Watch said.

International aid activities in much of Rakhine have been suspended, leaving approximately 2,50,000 people without food, medical care, and other vital humanitarian assistance.

Refugees told Human Rights Watch that while many people from Maungdaw township could escape to Bangladesh, tens of thousands of displaced Rohingyas are still hiding in the areas surrounding Rathedaung and Buthidaung Townships.

In another development, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a US-based international human rights organisation, has urged the US Senate to oppose a provision in the National Defence Authorisation Act that authorises an expansion of military ties with the Burmese military.

The group charged that the defence bill would further enable attacks against that country's Rohingya minority civilians by the Myanmar military. That bill is expected to be up for a floor vote today.

Tom Andrews, president and Chief Executive Officer of UUSC and a former Member of the US Congress, alternately urged in a statement on Friday, "We ask all Senators to support Senate Amendment 607 to the National Defence Authorisation Act that has been introduced by Senators Markey, Gardner and Cardin. That bipartisan amendment would cut off military assistance to Burma."

Dhaka expects help

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China also supported the fact that genocide was being carried out in Rakhine State.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, who briefed the top diplomats of South Asian and South East Asian countries in Dhaka, told reporters that tomorrow the Bangladesh government would take foreign diplomats to the country's south-eastern part, where Rohingyas have taken refuge fleeing violence in Myanmar.

Replying to a question what the Chinese and Indian envoys told them about the crisis, Haque said, "As China and India are our brotherly countries, they expressed solidarity with Bangladesh and assured us of staying with us to face the situation."

As his attention was drawn to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's extending support to Myanmar, the foreign secretary declined to comment on the matter.

He said the ASEAN countries have promised to stand by Bangladesh with urgent humanitarian assistance to address the Rohingya crisis.

He said Foreign Minister Ali told the diplomats that Myanmar should immediately stop killing and repressing Rohingyas to stop their entry into

Bangladesh. "Myanmar can take back its citizens after ascertaining their nationality through verifications."

The foreign secretary said they were yet to get any response from Myanmar to resolve the crisis.

He also said all the diplomats who attended the meeting voiced deep concern over Bangladesh's additional burden and humanitarian crisis following the influx of the refugees.

He said they all assured Bangladesh of standing by it at this critical time and share the burden of refugees by providing necessary resources to host the Rohingyas.

Ambassadors, high commissioners, CDAs from diplomatic Missions of Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Maldives were present at the diplomatic briefing.

Myanmar was not invited.

The foreign secretary said the countries that attended the briefing highly praised the Bangladesh government for sheltering the Rohingyas for all these years and also giving shelter to the Myanmar nationals who are fleeing violence in Rakhine. "They also stressed the need for protecting

civilians in Rakhine."

Earlier the foreign minister in his speech before the foreign diplomats highlighted that Bangladesh has always preferred having a bilateral solution to this longstanding problem and was successful in repatriating 236,599 Rohingyas to their homeland through a bilateral agreement in 1992.

He mentioned that the 1992 agreement recognised Rohingyas as 'members of Myanmar society'.

Ali also highlighted Bangladesh's efforts to address the security concerns of Myanmar, particularly by proposing MoUs in 2014 on border liaison office and security dialogue.

He said Bangladesh has also proposed joint inspection, coordinated patrolling of border, and 'joint operation' along the border. "Unfortunately, Myanmar has not responded to these proposals. Rather, they've been running a malicious propaganda terming the Rohingyas 'illegal migrants from Bangladesh' and the attackers to their BGP posts 'Bengali terrorists'."

Earlier on Sunday, the foreign minister held two back-to-back diplomatic briefings at the Padma on the Rohingya problem.