



The fenced life in the camp is both "real" and "imagined".

PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

time, ethnic-cleansing and genocide. It took Bangladesh more than four decades to recognise *birangona* or war heroines as freedom fighters. This indeed is the outcome of the women's movement and the trial of the war criminals of 1971. The demand had been a part of the women's movement; in other words, it was a movement which confronted the state and the nation to create space within their frames that would interrogate the notions of shame, honour, and purity. This emblem of the nation, i.e. the woman, however, does not enjoy the same rights as her male counterpart. Through the insertion of personal laws, the state has constitutionally limited her rights. As the women's movement carries on its struggle for the rape survivors of 1971, it is questionable if a minority woman feels part of the same movement. Kalpana Chakma's abduction allegedly by a military officer in 1996 from the CHT remains unresolved. But then there have been many other instances of sexual violations and rapes in the CHT, where silence or silencing has become the rule of the game. Here again one needs serious introspection into the minority within the minority and the supposed wholeness of the nation and the premise of equality of citizens.

The state also arrogates to itself the right of disenfranchising its citizens. The Rohingya community in Myanmar is a case in point here. It is an ongoing process since 1962, to the point that Myanmar today labels them as Bengali Muslims. The creation of this "otherness" and the genocide taking place in Myanmar is part of the nation-

and state-crafting project of the Burman nation, where the hegemony of Buddhist fundamentalism is increasingly coming to the foreground. It is also about the control of resources. In Sri Lanka, we also observed the disenfranchisement of the Tamils through citizenship laws and the supremacy of Sinhala nationalism. Tracking the path of nation and state formation in post-colonial societies, one observes cycles of repression in the name of nation and nationalism, while the biases and hierarchies of citizenship remain quite uncontested. It is assumed citizenship gives one full entry and equal privileges, which indeed is not the case. There are cycles of "otherness" and "exclusions" in the basic premises of state formation. The big challenge for us, as the Rohingya question unfolds and also as we face the challenges of rightlessness in our everyday lives, is: how do we translate the imagined into a reality, and whose dream and reality it is going to be? Indeed, in the backdrop of the challenges, hopes, aspirations and, above all, humaneness, there has to be multiplicity of dreams, imaginations, and realities, within a state. There is no escape from this reality and imagination.



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"One thing is clear— an ethnic cleansing or genocide is taking place in Myanmar"

In conversation with
Imtiaz Ahmed

Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor of International Relations at the University of Dhaka, has worked on various aspects of the Rohingya crisis, including its history, geopolitics, and human rights questions. He was the editor of the acclaimed book *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Responses of the State, Society & the International Community*.

In this interview with Shamsuddoza Sajen and Zyma Islam of *The Daily Star*, Professor Imtiaz talks about the politics behind the ongoing atrocities against the Rohingyas, and the necessary measures, including national and international interventions, towards a permanent solution to the crisis.

Can you give us a background on the genocide or ethnic cleansing taking place in Myanmar?

One thing is clear—an ethnic cleansing or genocide is taking place in Myanmar and there is an international consensus about it. Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, France's Emmanuel Macron and the UN Secretary-General António Guterres have all agreed upon this fact. The media has abundant evidence in the form of video footage and satellite images to show that there has been an ethnic cleansing of sorts.

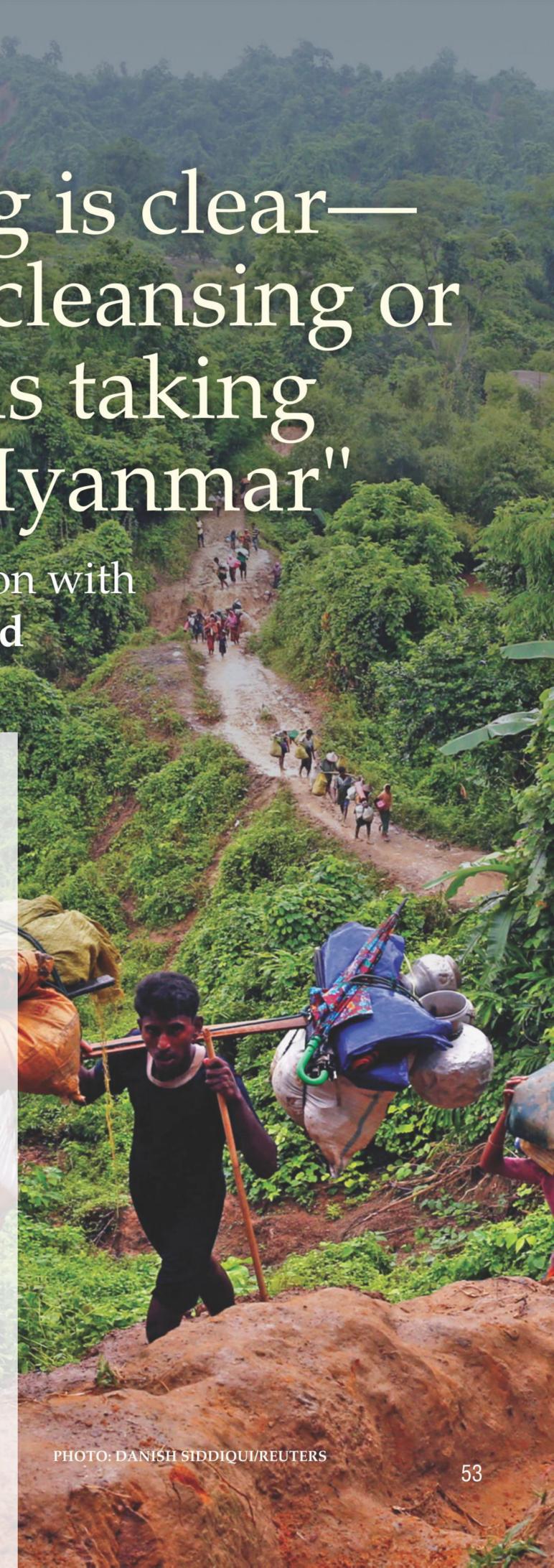


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