

Egyptian envoy to the council made a chilling statement when he said, "What choice are we leaving to these people, other than taking up arms to defend themselves?" The UN has described the military operation as a "textbook case of ethnic cleansing" and the Turkish and French presidents described the situation as "genocide".

These perpetually stateless Rohingyas will remain an aggrieved people with a strong sentiment to reclaim their lands. Why should one be surprised if a non-state actor exploits this sentiment? Can Bangladesh be blamed then? At the very least, this article can be read as an early

Minister on October 1, 2017. The talk was certainly a good start, but of course the 1992-style idea of verification of Rohingyas is not an appreciable beginning to things. Multilateral involvement for repatriation and a sustainable solution is of paramount importance. We must remain vigilant to deter any miscalculated strategic moves and efforts that may instigate communal violence in the Chittagong area and media propaganda which could jeopardise Bangladesh's relations with various countries supporting the process.

Bangladesh needs to pursue a more aggressive

framework of foreign policy so that multilateral platforms are responsive to Bangladesh's legitimate claims. It is evident that no single country can put up definite solutions to the Myanmar crisis. This has to be backed by adequate defence preparedness and defence diplomacy to ensure a comprehensive response mechanism to demonstrate Bangladesh's genuine effort and capability to resolve the Rohingya issue through multiple channels.

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Parliament, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to put pressure on their governments. This should be backed by extensive engagement with various think tanks that work as conduits between the government and stakeholders. Bangladesh will be assuming the OIC Chair in 2018, putting us in a position to assume leadership of the OIC member states in forging robust diplomacy to put pressure on Myanmar.

I must note that the recent UN Security Council meeting has provided strong grounds for Bangladesh to pursue legal options to deal with Myanmar. Both Myanmar and Bangladesh are parties to the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Diplomatic efforts must be geared to let the concerned governments convey the message to General Hlaing and other senior commanders that they could be convicted of grave crimes unless these atrocities come to a permanent end. A strong delegation, comprising veteran and seasoned diplomats, should be sent by Bangladesh to the session of the UN Human Rights Council meetings beginning next week, if not already done.

An international inquiry commission must be set up to measure the credibility of the claim of the Burmese military that the offensive over the past three weeks was a response to attacks against government facilities by the insurgent Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The sudden emergence of ARSA prior to the release of Kofi Annan's report and marshalling of Burmese Army battalions in Rakhine province weeks prior to the poorly armed ARSA's attack on military certainly raised a few eyebrows. I doubt whether ARSA had the competency to stage a colossal attack that would require military offensive to shove half a million human beings out of a country. For the Burmese military, the price of a generation of Rohingyas may not be much, but for the Asian region the price will be way more than its civilisational norms. I must warn again and again, unless the regional countries as well as the extra-regional ones are able to issue rightful condemnation accompanied by a meaningful practical approach to the Rohingya issue, we should know that terrorism has found its new sanctuary. We must bear witness.

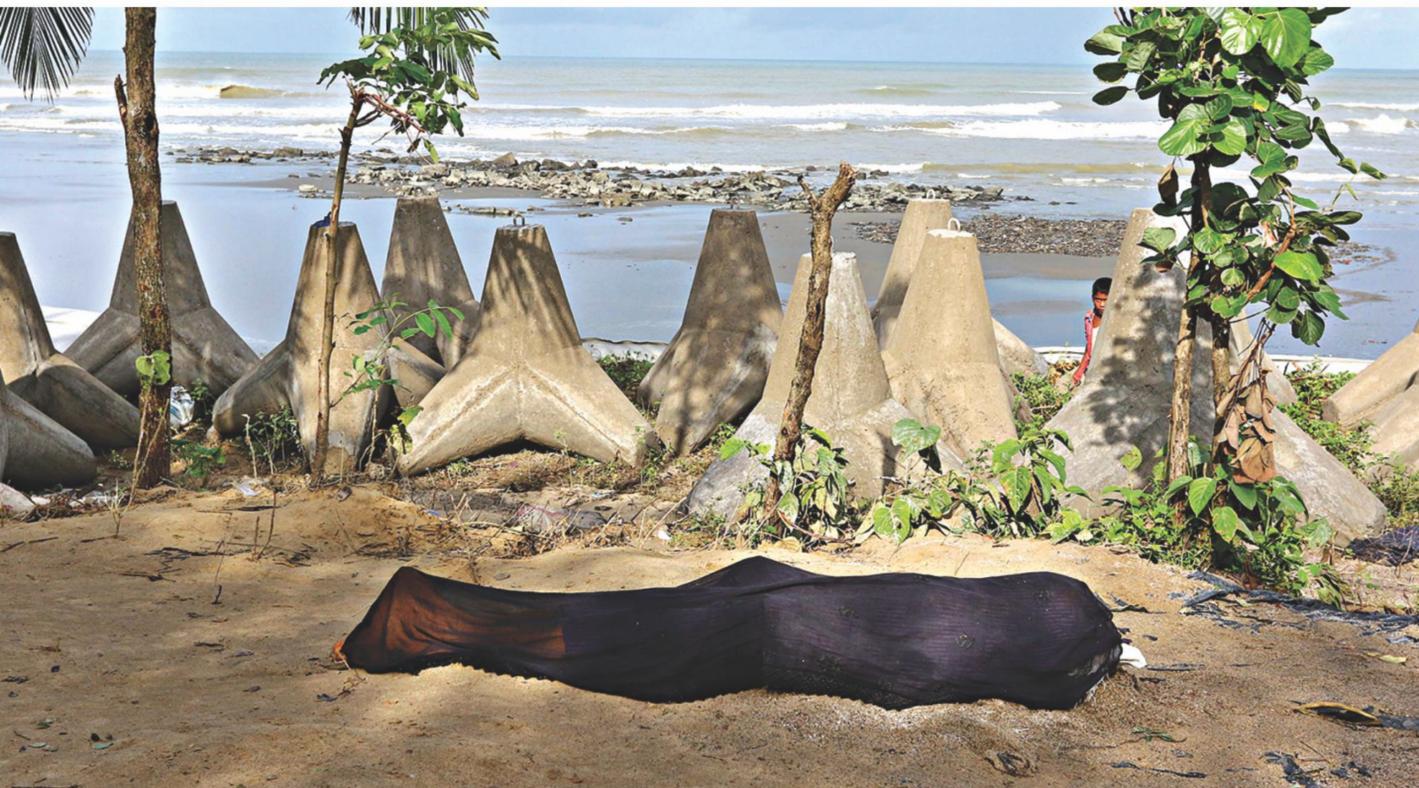


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avoided the highly provocative armed-conflict situations created by Myanmar. I am optimistic that effective diplomacy can help in mobilising the China-led alliance and the US-led alliance to work together on this issue. For that, the foreign office will have to go extra miles with the right people in the right places. A cell and taskforce comprised of veteran diplomats and experts should be formed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain strategic guidance on foreign policy to deal with Myanmar and India.

Separate delegations should be sent to meet and lobby the US Senate and Congress, the EU



General Hlaing's plan of systematic ethnic cleansing has resulted in over half a million Rohingyas fleeing their homeland and seeking refuge in Bangladesh.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

warning. And I must remind that the UN Secretary-General warned, "We should not be surprised if decades of discrimination and double standards in treatment of the Rohingya create an opening for radicalisation."

So how do we resolve this? One thing is very clear—Myanmar will take up strategies to prolong bilateral initiatives to resolve this crisis. China, at least proactively, took the initiative on April 2017 to help tackle the row over the flight of Rohingyas. Probably at the insistence of China, the Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar, Kyaw Tint Swe, came to Dhaka for a bilateral talk with the Bangladeshi Foreign

and concrete policy regarding Myanmar. Repatriation of the Rohingyas should remain as the focus for which a "Coalition of Willing" must be formed. Bangladesh has received strong support from the US, France, and the UK. Learning from the Syrian experience, Russian interest in Myanmar still remains focused on countering possible US involvement and protecting the potential for arms market. We need to recalculate our national interest.

Our foreign policy has to stop moving like a pendulum and should focus on proactive responses. I have repeatedly emphasised the need to formulate and implement an integrated holistic