

ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF CRIME IN COX'S BAZAR: A SECONDARY ANALYSIS ON ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH

Written by *Ela Akter*

M.S.S in Sociology, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

The Rohingya people are one of the most vulnerable and persecuted minorities in the world. Many Rohingyas fled from their homeland and took shelter in neighboring countries to escape persecution in Myanmar. The vast majority of the Rohingyas are in Bangladesh. This paper aims to analyze the issues and concerns of crime in Cox's Bazar due to the Rohingya crisis. The development of Rohingya mass exodus into Cox's Bazar and the increasing number of crimes have become a grave concern. The article mainly attempted to figure out different forms of traditional security threat to Cox's Bazar due to Rohingyas. It has found some traditional security threats created by Rohingyas, including human trafficking, murder, robbery, hijack, abduction, drug trafficking.

Keywords: Refugees, Rohingya, Security, Crimes, Crisis, Concern, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya crisis is one of the unique and most significant concerns in Bangladesh's history as the country has never experienced any problems like this in its history. The Rohingya are considered among the most vulnerable and oppressed minorities in the world. They are an ethnic minority group in Rakhine, the majority of whom are Muslim. Myanmar's government denies citizenship and treats them as stateless people.ⁱThe Rohingya population had been persecuted for years in Myanmar. They have been facing a brutal military crackdown by Myanmar military force and Buddhist extremists in Rakhine. To escape the brutality in Myanmar, Rohingya refugees left their country and found their ways several times to Bangladesh. More than one million Rohingyas have migrated to refugee camps in the Bangladeshi district of Cox's Bazar. Cox's Bazar is the largest sea beach globally has reached a peak regarding national revenue generation. Rohingyas subsequently have started moving into Cox's Bazar and settled down in Teknaf and Ukhiya, two sub-district areas of Cox's Bazar.ⁱⁱ

However, such a large population of Rohingya is now becoming the reason for many problems in Cox's Bazar area. According to law enforcement agencies, the allegations and litigations against Rohingyas have been increasing day by day alarmingly.ⁱⁱⁱThe allegation includes murder, rape, abduction, narcotics, human trafficking, as well as a dacoit. However, it has been apparent in recent days that Cox's Bazar's Security is being threatened day by day. Besides, Rohingyas are also involved in stealing, hijacking, snatching, sweeping the accessories of luggage and suitcases of tourists, those have created an atmosphere of fear among tourists.^{iv} The government of Bangladesh gave temporary shelter to the Rohingyas for humanitarian reasons but later it was no longer temporary, about 11 lakh Rohingyas have been living in Cox's Bazar for more than three years. Although the Bangladesh government has repeatedly asked the Myanmar government to take back the Rohingyas, the Myanmar government has not taken back the Rohingyas staying in Bangladesh on various pretexts. Initially, many people thought that Rohingyas would not live in the long run and there would be no problem, but as the days go by, those ideas of the common people are proving to be wrong and Rohingyas are constantly having problems. This article reviews what crimes the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar are committing and how much they are causing concern day by day.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on qualitative research. In order to achieve the objective of this research, mainly content analysis method was obtained. Data were collected directly from secondary sources. Secondary data collected from books of various authors, hand books, thesis, magazines, newspapers, treaties available journals, websites, public records and statistics, historical documents, government and non-government organization reports, scholarly articles and research reports, including some articles published in electronic, print, news media and other documents.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the different issues and concern of crime in Cox's bazar after Rohingya influx
2. To investigate various effects of crime in Cox's bazar
3. To recommend ways for mitigating the crisis

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Human Trafficking

Despite the guards and restrictions in place, the Rohingyas slip out of the camps. Rohingyas, particularly children and women, are in the eyes of human traffickers. At the end of 2017, nearly 40 people were identified as trafficking women and children inside the refugee camps. Forced prostitution is sadly becoming a norm in the camps. Women and girls are being bought, sold, exported, and often lured to brothels under the pretext of marriage or with the promise of employment.^v Several groups are active in abducting women and children and trafficking them abroad, particularly to Middle East countries, as slaves and sex slaves.^{vi}

Rape and Sexual Harassment

More than 31 cases have been filed about the rape and attempted rape of Rohingyas. According to Post Traumatic Stress Order Theory, the human sense, morality, and norms naturally do not work for people. At the same time, he/she has horrendous experiences or is going through a disastrous condition of life, inhuman treatment, having the uncertainty of fundamental rights, minimal condition human rights, and no conformity of getting justice.^{vii} So the growth of

criminal activities like rape and attempt rape has been increased. Allegations mainly came from the Rohingyas against their nationals, and sometimes it has come from tourists and locals being sexually harassed.

Arms

In Cox's Bazar, 144 local and international NGOs set up their office according to Bangladesh NGO Bureau affairs.^{viii} Some NGOs are suspended for being alleged to provide arms among Rohingya youths. Foreign ministry termed these acts as misdeed.^{ix} Along with bearing firearms and sharp objects, the local community alleged that other domestic weapons are also available to Rohingyas. Local people, experts, and law enforcers expressed their grave concern over the critical issue.

Drug trafficking

Drug trafficking has been a longstanding issue in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh has recently opened its border to allow Rohingyas free access from the humanitarian viewpoint. However, the opportunists grab this as the chance to import Yaba, Heroin, Fencidil, Marijuana, and other narcotics. According to Reuters, Bangladesh has recently become the big market of Drug.^x According to Government, A record number of methamphetamine pills, around 53 million, were retrieved by law enforcement officials in 2018.^{xi} Rohingyas's massive and unregulated influx makes it difficult for the local administration to end this drug trafficking. Rohingya young people are mostly unemployed. So it has been effortless for the local or global drug smugglers to abuse them into drug trafficking.

Robbery and Hijacking

According to Cox's Bazar police officials, at least 9 cases have been filed about robbery and hijacking against Rohingyas till July 2019 since 2017, while the recent influx has newly begun.^{xiii} However, the robbery and hijacking are being increased rampantly due to lack of sufficient police patrolling, proper monitoring over the Rohingyas movement, and excessive growth of Rohingyas across the town than the number of law enforcers.

Murdering and Committing Violence

According to Molla... Personal, familial, and tribal strife are being intensified daily, which inflicts an enormous amount of violence and casualties inside the camp. The conflicts mainly

establish dominance and leadership on several issues, including repatriation, rehabilitation, tenting, and foreign aid distribution. At least 22 people were reportedly killed, including one of the tribal leaders (Molla, 2019).^{xiii} Therefore recently, the tension between local and Rohingyas has also escalated, resulting in large-scale violence. Usurpation of the local people's land, allegation and counter allegation of crimes, and expressing hatred are the main reason for conflict.

Fake identity

In recent times, Rohingyas are found bearing Bangladeshi national ID cards and passports illegally to gain work abroad, particularly in Middle Eastern countries. However, they often get involved with crime and were detained, documented in several studies, and widely covered by the news media. It has created a problem for Bangladesh's image worldwide.^{xiv} Furthermore, according to the locals, many old entrants have paid bribes to third parties to gain Bangladeshi identification. Local social workers of the camps have also noted that many new Rohingyas have access to mobile phones. They pay Tk.5-10 to get their phones charged. It is worrying since the GoB has banned telecom operators from selling SIMs to the Rohingyas.^{xv}

Crime Acts on Tourist Spots

Many Rohingyas in tourist spots are mostly involved with stealing and sweeping the accessories, luggage, and tourists' precious goods. Teasing, jeering, whistling, and odd indications to girls in verbal and attitudinal forms have recently become common in Cox's bazaar. In most cases, the Rohingyas, mainly the youngsters, are involved with such a crime, which is considered sexual harassment. Many times, the harassment reached a dangerous level and ended up with rape and gang rape.

Insurgency Threat

In recent days, several national and international terrorist outfits became active in Cox's Bazar. Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is one of the Rakhine based leading terrorist organization. Recently, many ARSA members have been operative in Bangladesh, as many news media reported.^{xvi} They are allegedly plotting a terrorist attack on Myanmar by using Bangladesh's land. Bangladesh is facing several security challenges due to the emergent Rohingya crisis. The locals and the aid workers echoed concerns over the prospect of future deterioration of the law's law and order situation. The length of the crisis will depend on the

length of stay of the Rohingyas. With help from national and international humanitarian and development agencies, the Bangladesh government is attempting to improve the camps' situation. However, Bangladesh must find a comprehensive solution to the refugee crisis. Security measures in the Rohingya camps and adjacent areas, particularly in the country's Southern, have to be strengthened. The law enforcement agencies must be vigilant to stop illegal activities, drug trade, trafficking, and terrorism. All explicit and implicit costs related to the Rohingya crisis should be estimated and Ensure a smooth repatriation process of the Rohingyas, as agreed between Bangladesh and Myanmar's governments.

The Rohingya refugees who are completely marginalized are most vulnerable to the human trafficking. It has been reported that international human trafficking gangs are actively looking at this situation to exploit the vulnerability of the Rohingya for profiteering.^{xvii}

Islam says that, it is also known that many Rohingya families arriving in Bangladesh are without any male family members. Therefore, many young women and children will fall victim of the trafficking gangs and end up in international markets for prostitution and slave labour. Trafficking and drug rings that include Rohingya men have become notoriously active in these camps, adding to the lack of security. And it goes without saying that the most vulnerable groups in these camps are the Rohingya women and girls who fall victim to violence either inside their makeshift homes by their partners or outside by other Rohingya men.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Analyzing and scrutinizing the information and proofs collected by different human rights groups and researchers, it might be well concluded that the Rohingyas in Rakhine state of Myanmar are facing the final stage of genocide. Decades of persecution has taken on a new and intensified from since the mass killings in 2017. The marked escalation in state sponsored stigmatization, discrimination, violence and segregation and the systemic weakening of the community have made precarious the very existence of the Rohingays. For long they have been being harassed terrorized and slaughtered. They have been being isolated and segregated into detention camps and securitized villages and ghettos; they have also been being systematically weakened through longer, illness, denial of civil rights and loss of livelihood. All of these places them at high risk of annihilation. And as a result, the influx of 11 lacks and 40 thousand

of Rohingyas are making the worst phase of the natural way of life of Bangladesh. Due to the Rohingyas, along with the increase in crime in Cox's Bazar, social and moral degradation has taken a massive shape. According to locals in Ukhiya, the Rohingyas have led to an increase in trafficking in women, drug trafficking, theft and even prostitution. This crime trend in Cox's Bazar could become a threat to the country in the near future if it is not curtailed very soon.

Recommendations

1. In general, the government must be strengthened and public education campaigns should work to normalize the recent vulnerable situation in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camp.
2. Law enforcement group of Bangladesh has to monitor the matter properly.
3. The Bangladeshi government and the international community including UN agencies and local and international NGO'S must continue providing critical humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya community including education, health support.
4. Myanmar should exclude the in equal law and policy and discrimination.
5. To ensure the protection and human rights of Rohingya community.
6. A co-ordinated multilateral effort to address the fundamental human rights and religious freedom violations should be launched with principal guidance from UN, European Union, and five permanent members of the UN.
7. An independent investigation mechanism should be allowed to target measures in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camp.
8. To ensure the justice and accountability.
9. To stop the further influx of Rohingya and also to stop another ethnic cleansing without any type of condition.
10. To reform a safe zone for Rohingya community in Myanmar.

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Ratcliffe, R. (2017). *Who are the Rohingya, and what is happening in Myanmar?* The Guardian, September 6, 2017. Available at: www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/Sep/06/who-are-the-Rohingya-and-what-is-happening-in-Myanmar.
- ⁱⁱ UNHCR, B. (2019). *Rohingya refugee response – Bangladesh refugee population density*. Dhaka. Retrieved from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71428>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Khan, M. J. (2019). *Curbing Rohingya crimes: New police unit on cards*. Dhaka: The Daily Star.
- ^{iv} WHO. (2019). *Emergency: Rohingya crisis*. Dhaka: WHO, Bangladesh.
- Therefore, This study attempts to assess the current crime concerns of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.
- ^v Finnigan, Christopher (2018), *Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Five Challenges for the Future*. Available at https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/11/21/rohingya-a-refugees-in-bangladesh-five-challenges-for-the-future/&ved=2ahUKEwi75bT3rLrpAhUTxDgGHaoCFIQFjABegQIDRAG&usg=AOvVaw3Juz2ZuyQ_CIFGkJKJrOOT
- ^{vi} Al-Jazeera. (2019). *Rohingya girls rescued from traffickers in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/rohingya-girls-rescued-traffickers-bangladesh-190512101949513.html>
- ^{vii} National Institute of Mental Health. (2019). *Post-traumatic stress disorder*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>.
- ^{viii} Mahmud, T. (2018). *How NGOs are driving Cox's Bazar's economy*. Dhaka Tribune. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2018/08/27/how-ngos-are-driving-cox-s-bazar-s-economy>.
- ^{ix} Bdnews24.com. (2019). *Bangladesh suspends NGO projects for 'making' sharp weapons for Rohingya refugees*. Dhaka. Retrieved from: <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2019/08/29/bangladesh-suspends-ngo-projects-for-making-sharp-weapons-for-rohingyarefugees>.
- ^x Das, K. N. (2017). *Stateless Rohingya refugees sucked into the booming Bangladesh drug trade*. London: Reuters.
- ^{xi} Gulf News. (2019). *Bangladesh makes record drugs seizure amid the crackdown, and Gulf News cited this news story from AFP*. Doha. Retrieved from: <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/621757/Bangladesh-makes-record-drugs-seizure-amid-crackdo>. [Accessed 02/02/2020].
- ^{xii} Khan, M. J. (2019). *Curbing Rohingya crimes: New police unit on cards*. Dhaka: The Daily Star.
- ^{xiii} Molla, M. A. M. (2019). *Refugee Camps: Crime spikes while Rohingyas despair*. The Daily Star. Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/refugee-camps-crime-spikes-while-rohingyas-despair-1744768>
- ^{xiv} Imran, HFA & Mian, MN 2014, 'The Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh: A vulnerable group in Law and policy,' *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 226-253.
- ^{xv} Oh, S.(2017). *Surveillance and Control: The Encampment and Biometric Identification of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*. ISEAS Perspective 93. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- ^{xvi} Alam, M. (2018). *How the Rohingya crisis is affecting Bangladesh — and why it matters*. The Washington Post.
- ^{xvii} Islam, Md. R. (2020) *Health and Crime Threat in Cox's Bazar: A Secondary Analysis on Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*, *ASIAN LAW & PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW* ISSN 2581 6551 VOLUME 5 – 2020 © All Rights Reserved, The Law Brigade Publishers.