



Standing with the Rohingya: Despite COVID 19 Crisis, Diverse Leaders Come Together to Mark Anniversary of Genocide and Mass Displacement August 21, 2020



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STOP THE GENOCIDE IN BURMA!

AUGUST 22, 2020

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K.V. Soon Vidyana
Executive Member of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)



Naw K'nyaw Paw
General Secretary of the Karen Women's Organization & Recipient of the 2019 International Women of Courage Award



Imam Malik Mujahid
Chairman of Justice for All & Founder of Sound Vision



Alan Senauke
Founder of the Buddhist Humanitarian Project



Beth Lilach
Former Director of Holocaust Center in Glen Cove, NY



Yasmin Ullah
President of the Rohingya Human Rights Network



Jeff Pickering
Policy Communications Director, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)



Dr. Shaykh Omar Suleiman
President of Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research



Benedict Rogers
East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide



Farah Chandu
Director, Willow Interfaith Women's Choir



Hafsar Tameesuddin
New Zealand Country Coordinator, Free Rohingya Coalition



Jan Jan Maran
Co-MC and Founder of STAND Chapter at George Mason University



AK Rahim
Sociolinguistic Researcher, worked in Rohingya refugee camps



David Rubenstein
Former Director of Save Darfur Coalition, Coordinator of Action for Racial Justice



Nay San Iwin
Co-founder of Free Rohingya Coalition



Shwe Maung
Former Member of Parliament & President of the Arakan Institute for Peace & Development (AiPAD)



Razia Sultana
Founder, Rohingya Women Welfare & Recipient of the 2019 International Women of Courage Award



John Packer
Director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre



George Mathew
Artistic Director of Music for Life International, Beethoven for Rohingya ConcertForce

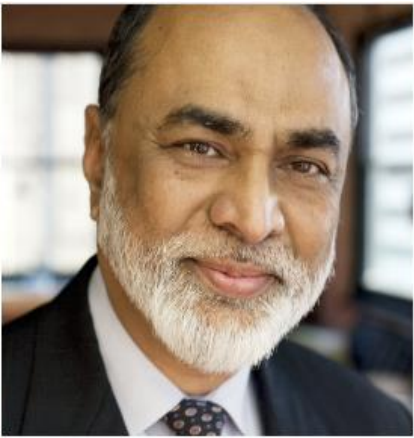


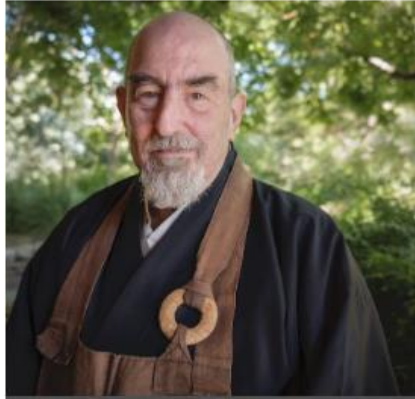
Adem Carroll
UN Programs Director, Burma Task Force



Hena Zuberi
Co-MC and Director of Justice For All

Register here: JusticeForAll.org/StopGenocideRally/





This month marks the three-year anniversary of the mass genocidal expulsion of the Rohingya people from their homeland. However, this atrocity is not one of the past.

The Burmese military has a monopoly on political power, and it operates as a fascist organization—their grand strategy is to transform all ethnic minorities into Burman under the banner of union.

To this day, Burmese authorities continue to destroy Rohingya villages to make room for military bases, security posts, and massive IDP camps. Discriminatory policies in Burma have not changed since the mass expulsion.

Lacking the restoration of their citizenship, Rohingya continue to face severe movement restrictions, as well as little access to education, healthcare, and employment. Moreover, increased fighting between the Arakan and Burmese armies has further put Rohingya at risk.

Access to journalists and humanitarian agencies has long been severely restricted, and an internet shutdown has been in place in parts of Rakhine and Chin states since June 2019. While the COVID 19 contagion steadily increases, this mass displacement increases the risk of hunger and mass fatalities. Moreover, the rainy season has begun.

We cannot trust government claims that a “pathway to citizenship” will restore Rohingya rights; hierarchical systems of ID cards have been designed to divide and control the population, not integrate it as part of a pluralistic society. We cannot trust an organization whose grand strategy is genocide.

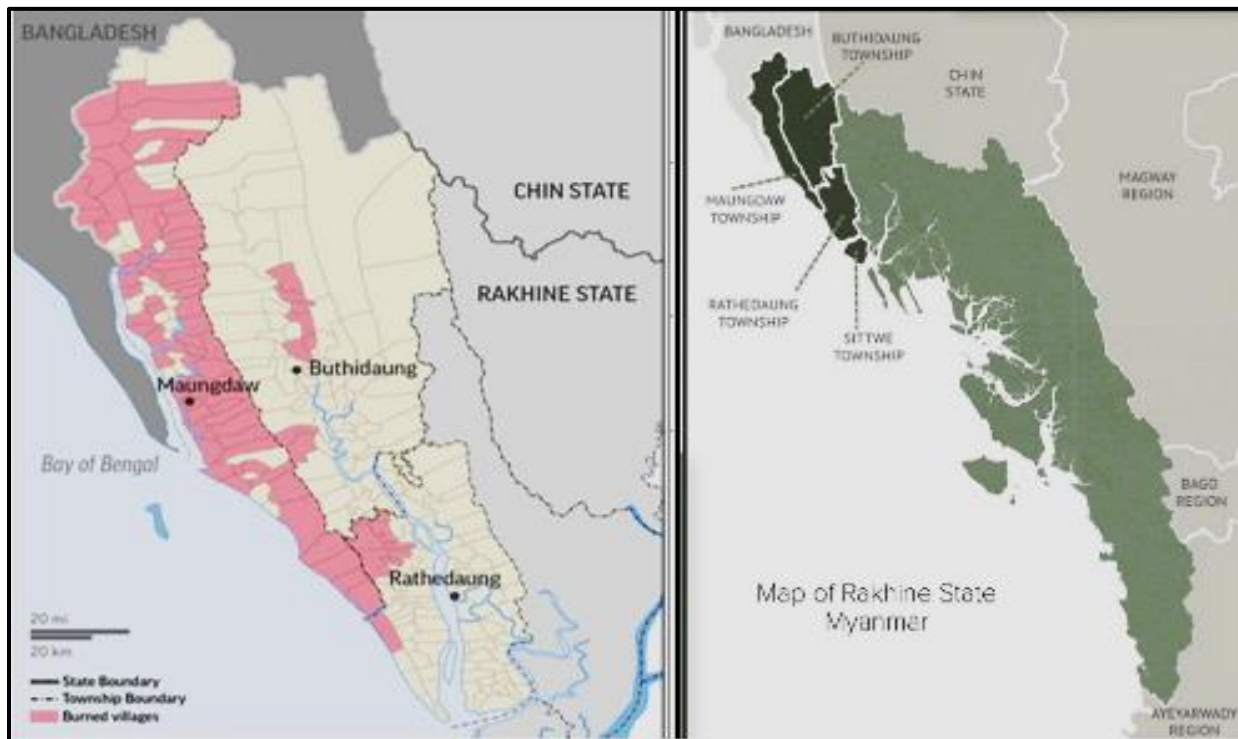
The Rohingya have suffered greatly, as other ethnic groups in Burma have before them. We call on the world to commit to constructive solutions, not merely repatriation theater driven by political considerations.

[REGISTER NOW](#)



Rohingyas, the Victims of Sustained Genocidal Persecution for Nearly 40 Years

Tracts of Rohingya Muslim villages in Rakhine State that have been partially or completely burned



Source: The Arakan Project

Grave atrocities Rohingya people are facing in Myanmar, also known as Burma, is alarming. The Rohingya people numbering 1.3 million is a Muslim minority living in the Arakan state in western Myanmar. Although they are living in the country for generations, they are denied citizenship and basic necessities including basic healthcare, work and schooling. They are primary targets of hate crimes and discrimination amounting to genocide fueled by extremist nationalist Buddhist monks and Thein Sein government. Yet there are notable figures within the country who embrace Rohingya struggle and dares to speak about the condition of Rohingya. Buddhist scholar Dr Maung Zami, member of the Permanent People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka and a co-author of The Slow Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya (2014) is an outspoken critic of racist nationalism and violence in his native country. As a prominent dissident of semi-military regime of Thein Sein, he has fled from Myanmar due to safety concerns and resides in London. We conducted an interview via email with Dr Zami offering invaluable insights into the complex sociopolitical situation in Myanmar today.

Some Rakhine Buddhists argue that they are falsely accused and they are real victims who are under constant threat in their own land. Do you think this is true? Do you think that both Muslims and Buddhists have equal share in escalating violence?

Both Rohingyas and Rakhines are victims of Burmese oppression. The Rohingyas fare worst as they suffer from double-oppression: the legalized persecution by the Burmese central government since early 1978, and direct and state-organized terror campaigns to drive them out of Burma -on grounds that they pose a “threat to national security” because of their historical and anthropological link with former East Bengal (East Pakistan until 1973 and Bangladesh since Bangladesh’s independence in 1973)- and the racist and majority Buddhist Rakhine who treat them like dirt.

The Rakhines are a colonized people by the Buddhist Burmese since 1785 when their kingdom was decimated by the invading Burmese. The Rakhines outnumber Rohingya by 3/1. Rakhines man local administrative and authority structure, in addition. So, when Rakhines say they are threatened by the Rohingyas, it is really a case of Rakhines scapegoating the Rohingyas for the real oppression, colonial control and economic exploitation by the Burmese and the Burmese military. Because the Burmese military is way too powerful for the Rakhines to rise up against the Rakhine take their rage and grievances out on the most vulnerable but widely disliked Rohingyas in their midst.

The Rohingya population was denied to self-identify in the 2014 nationwide census. What consequences do you foresee?

Not only are they denied the right to self-identity -which is international legal/human rights norm- they are being forced to assume an identity as “Bengali” by their oppressor: both the Burmese regime and the Rakhine and other Buddhists, especially the majority Burmese. The consequences are of genocidal proportions: destruction of the entire ethnic community, both starting and ending with the identity erase.

Myanmar is to hold general elections in 2015. Do you think elections' result will reduce the role of military in politics? Is there a possibility of emerging of a new political cadre which will address the Rohingya issue?

Regardless of what happened in the elections, whoever wins, there is generally speaking no political class or circle among the pro-democracy, pro-human rights opposition movement or the ruling military regime. They all share common genocidal strain of racism against the Rohingya. Aung San Suu Kyi is no better in this regard, except she is likely to respond more positively to the international pressure than the regime has been.

The military will find ways to control politics and economy -in spite of the elections- as long as the Constitution is not changed significantly, especially the 3 clauses: 1) which legalizes any future coup by the commander in chief; 2) bars any type of judicial persecution against the military oppressors and 3) guarantee 25% of the parliamentary seats.

The leader of the 969 Movement, Monk Ashin Wirathu stated several times that the movement is unfairly blamed for rising Islamophobia in the country. And President Thein Sein defended Wirathu saying his order was just striving peace and prosperity. How do you see these remarks?

Wirathu was on the record (tape-recorded and it is now on line) that he wanted to launch and lead a campaign to purge Burma of all Muslims -“starve them to death, make them homeless”- in a style of a CIA operation -all in his own words. His intention was made public to a gathering of hundreds of monks at a well-known Buddhist pavilion in Mandalay as early as 2004 before he was sentenced to jail and jailed, for his involvement in burning alive an entire Muslim family - a well-to-do grocer and a Haj returnee- in his birthplace called Kyauk Hse (about 45 minutes-drive from Mandalay).

Burmese intelligence and the entire government of Thein Sein (and before him the now aging despot General Than Shwe) knew all this. But the problem is the military regime agrees with Wirathu’s ideas. Myanmar generals have systematically “cleansed” the armed forces in Burma of all Muslim officers over the past 53 years -as a matter of unstated anti-Muslim policies. In fact, only Buddhists are promoted. Now the military has stopped recruiting any Muslims for any rank, however low in the armed forces. In addition, *Reuters* news agency documented that the highest level of military leadership has authorized and commissioned the Ministry of Religious Affairs to publish anti-Muslim writings over the past 27 years -starting with Than Shwe’s boss named Senior General Saw Maung. So, when Thein Sein as President was defending Wirathu he is lying with a straight face. Nothing less.

Do you think the Arakan conflict is for the advantage of Burmese government since Arakanese Muslims are often treated as a scapegoat?

Yes, so far the horizontal aspect of the conflict in Rakhine between Rohingyas and the Rakhine has enabled the regime in central Burma to divert attention of the domestic constituency -mainly Buddhist monks and Burmese public- away from the real issue of continued control of economy and power in the country. But mind you the conflict has been exploited, expanded and blown out of proportions by the Burmese military -which is the original sponsor of a state-directed, legalized and policy-induced mass persecution- in a word, genocide -of the Rohingyas.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a prominent opposition figure having massive popularity inside the country and abroad. Yet she kept quiet on the rights of minorities in the country especially Rohingya. What are the reasons behind it? Do you think it may change in the near future if she prevails in the political struggle with Thein Sein and military?

She is a racist herself -who has justified Islamophobia of the Buddhists on Britain’s *Radio Four*, in the fall of 2013- to a famous TV and radio interviewer Mishal Hussein. There is no factual basis or prospect that she will be less racist in the least likely event that the military will ever let her assume presidency.

Myanmar is an ethnically diverse county and Rohingya is not the only Muslim minority in the country. How is the relationship of Rohingya with other minorities? Are all minorities subject same kind of aggressive minority policies of the government?

No, only Rohingyas are the victims of sustained genocidal persecution for nearly 40 years. Other minorities, Buddhists and Christians (including Karens and Kachins and Chins, etc.) as well as even non-Rohingya Muslims are racist towards the Rohingyas -as the direct result of nearly 40 years of the media and the education system demonization and illegalization of the Rohingyas.

How did British colonial administration treat the Muslim community in the country? What are the legacies of British colonial administration regarding the Arakan issue?

British colonialism was not simply about economic exploitation and political control. It was a huge edifice of multiple-racisms. British colonial rulers were racist and genocidaires themselves. It is well-documented that the British exported their racism -then justified on pseudo-scientific anthropology of the late 1900 AD- to its colonies. Ethnic and racial divide and rule was a corner stone of British colonial administrations all over the world. But generally, Britain is an irresponsible colonial master; to date Britain refuses to help address the problems of racial and ethnic conflicts around the world many of which have roots in their policies 100-200 years ago, from Palestine and the Middle East to India and Pakistan to Burma.

Discriminative policies including restrictions on marriages and birthrates were in force before Thein Sein. What are additional discriminative policies introduced in his term of presidency?

Restriction on population growth on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion and nationality is considered an act of genocide -out of five acts, when pursued with the intent to gradually destroy or reduce the number of a particular

people. So, this genocidal population policy has been expanded by Thein Sein himself, when he requested the Parliament to draft four new laws that will restrict interracial and religious marriages. In addition, it is Thein Sein who revoked the last Rohingya legal documentation -the temporary registration cards issued to the Rohingyas in exchange for the formerly/originally citizenship cards.

If you would suggest a roadmap to break the cycle of violence against Arakan Muslims what would the main points be?

The roadmap will start with the UN -and key powers in the Security Council- holding a serious International Conference on the Rohingya affairs. Burma is a signatory since Dec 1949 of the UN Genocide Convention -which came into effect on 9 Dec 1948. As such, it is in violation of the treat- the Convention is a binding treaty, not just a resolution. The conference will call for immediate lifting of all restrictions and disruptions on humanitarian aid including food, medicine, and medical treatment; calls for the guarantee for the physical safety of all Rohingyas from the attacks by local racist Rakhine groups; calls for the end of blanket impunity for those local troops and Rakhine racists alike who harm Rohingyas; calls for the restoration of basic human rights; calls for the restoration of citizenship of anyone who belongs to the Rohingya ethnic community; and recognize their right to self-identity -and end the official denial that they were ever an ethnic group, on the basis of the government's documentation that irrefutably established the Rohingyas as the officially recognized ethnic group of Burma starting in the 1950s and ending around 1965.

International community has welcomed democratic reforms of Thein Sein and removed international sanctions. Yet the Rohingya situation has improved little. Do you think that international pressure to the government would result in policy change regarding Arakan?

Thein Sein regime reformed not out of will but out of a very difficult political and strategic situation where it was forced to rely on China and Russia alone -and in the face of the collapse of dictatorships in the Arab world where the leaders ended up being killed or jailed.

The only way the regime will change its genocidal policy towards the Rohingya is by sustained, strategic and serious international pressure. Only when they understand there will be a heavy price for them to pay internationally -in terms of economic squeeze, threats of arrests and trial at the International Criminal Court or support for the radicals in the country will the regime come to their senses and behave. They are thugs and bullies, in essence, who dare to beat up and murder the weak and the weaponless. The only language they understand and appreciate is bigger force, more powerful bully.

What do you think about the role of international relief organizations in the region? What kind of projects would you suggest to improve conditions of Rohingya people?

Humanitarianism is all well and fine. It plays an ameliorative role. But the root cause is politically and racially driven genocide. In situations of genocide, humanitarianism is woefully inadequate. It is a band-aid, not a cure.

Tags: 969 movement ; Arakan ; Ashin Wirathu ; Aung San Suu Kyi ; Burmese ; genocide ; Myanmar ; Rakhines; Thein Sein ;

Source:https://insamer.com/en/rohingyas-the-victims-of-sustained-genocidal-persecution-for-nearly-40-years_197.html

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2014/11/burma-genocide/>



The threat to Burma's minorities



Government targeting Rohingya, Karen peoples, critics say

The "slow-burning genocide" of Burma's Rohingya, a Muslim minority, was the focus of Harvard scholars and Burmese activists gathered at Loeb House this week. Professor Amartya Sen (left) said that it's important that the international community pressure the government to change its official policy and restore citizenship to the group.

Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard Staff Photographer

BY Alvin Powell Harvard Staff Writer

DATE November 7, 2014

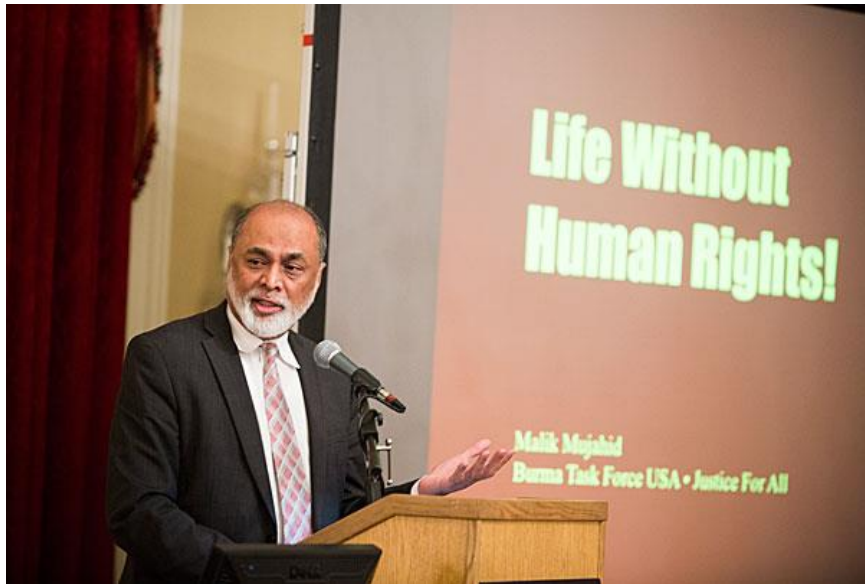
Burma's Rohingya people are being slowly squeezed from their homeland by decades-long government policies that critics say deny them citizenship, health care, work, and schooling, with such tactics punctuated by killings, destroyed homes, and tens of thousands sent to camps.

That was the picture painted by Harvard scholars and Burmese activists who gathered in Cambridge to discuss what they described as the slow genocide of Burma's Rohingya, a Muslim minority in the Buddhist-majority country that has endured a wide array of abuse at the hands of the former military government.

Though the international community has welcomed steps toward Burmese democracy in recent years, the situation for the Rohingya has improved little, speakers said Tuesday. The Rohingya, who have a long history in Burma, which is also known as Myanmar, remain a stateless people, denied citizenship and subject not just to official oppression, but also to violence from the local Rakhine people, as evidenced by the 2012 riots that displaced 90,000 inhabitants.

In a related development, researchers at the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School [released a report](#) this week detailing alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Burmese military against another ethnic group, the Karen, who live near the country's border with Thailand.

The report named three high-ranking officers in charge of a 2005-2008 campaign against the Karen and said that villagers were “indiscriminately attacked,” civilians were “captured and executed,” and tens of thousands were displaced during the campaign.



Malik Mujahid, chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions and president of Justice for All, showed aerial photos of neighborhoods burned to ash. He said the residents of these neighborhoods were marched off to internment camps, where 140,000 live today, often without enough to eat. Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard Staff Photographer

“To break the prevailing cycles of violence in Myanmar, there

is a need for concerted effort to reform military policies and practices that have fueled indiscriminate attacks against innocent civilians,” the report said. “Scrutiny into other military operations, particularly those that are ongoing, is also warranted.”

The Rohingyas’ troubles can be traced to a 1982 citizenship law that failed to list them among the nation’s indigenous people. Instead, they were classified as Muslim immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh, and denied citizenship. Subsequent campaigns have turned not just official policy against them, but also public opinion, something that would have to change for the situation to be remedied, according to Thomas W. Lamont University Professor [Amartya Sen](#).

“In order to win this battle, I think the support of the people is absolutely essential — who have been fed lies,” Sen said.

Sen said it is important that the international community pressure the government to change its policy and restore citizenship to the group, and implement educational campaigns to change the minds of the broader population.

The Loeb House discussion, titled “The Slow-Burning Genocide of Rohingyas,” was intended to review the situation and develop a research agenda for work to provide a foundation for advocacy and identify possible interventions. The session featured several members of the Rohingya refugee community and representatives of groups interested in humanitarian issues, such as the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Physicians for Human Rights, the nonprofit China Medical Board, and the British think tank Overseas Development Institute.

Harvard faculty and researchers involved included Sen; [Felicia Knaul](#), associate professor of global health and social medicine and associate professor of medicine; and Maung Zarni, a lecturer on global health and social medicine. The event was convened by the [Harvard Global Equity Initiative](#), which Knaul directs, together with partner organizations.

In introductory remarks, Knaul said that research into the situation is important and that resulting evidence can inform advocacy. She also said that the problem is personal to her, since her father survived the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz and much of the rest of her family was killed in the Holocaust.



Wakar Uddin is pictured in Loeb House at Harvard University. Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard Staff Photographer

Sen said it is important that the word “genocide” not be tossed around lightly, and he acknowledged that this situation looks different from the murderous examples of Nazi Germany and 1994 Rwanda. Still, he said, the term applies in this case, with lives lost not just to the outbursts of violence, but also to the denial of healthcare and the right to work.

Malik Mujahid, chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions and president of Justice for All, showed aerial photos of neighborhoods burned to ash. He said the residents of these neighborhoods were marched off to internment camps, where 140,000 live today, often without enough to eat.

Those Rohingya who live outside the camps are barred from attending school, holding jobs, or traveling freely. They must obtain government permission to marry and are limited to having just two children. Hundreds of them leave the country daily, he said, risking dangerous travel on overcrowded boats to become refugees in Bangladesh, Thailand, and other nearby nations.

Tun Khin, a Rohingya refugee, was born in Burma and grew up there. He and his parents fled the country in the 1970s for Bangladesh. They were repatriated to Burma, and eventually fled a second time. Today, he is a refugee living in the United Kingdom, neither a Burmese citizen nor a foreigner. He called for support to relieve the Rohingyas’ “collective nightmare.”

Another refugee, Daw Kin Hla, said she was born in Burma in 1952 and had worked as a middle school teacher before leaving the country. Rohingya civil servants, she said, have been forced to retire or quit their jobs. Today, she said, her family is fractured, with her husband living with her in the U.K., a son in Germany, and a son and daughter in the United States

U Ba Sein, another Rohingya refugee living in Britain, traced the oppression to the late 1970s. He said he saw people physically abused by army personnel, tied up and marched off, and heard stories of rapes and killings.

Zarni, who co-authored the 2014 report “The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar’s Rohingya” in the Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal, detailed official and popular narratives in Burma that call the Rohingya illegal immigrants, a threat to national security, “viruses” and “invaders,” a threat to Buddhist culture, and economic blood-suckers.

However, he said that contrary to the government’s assertions, the Rohingya have always lived in Burma. There are records of them dating back to the colonial period in 1790, and they were recognized by the post-independence Burmese government. “They did not come from anywhere else. The Rohingya are there on their ancestral land,” Zarni said.

Source: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2014/11/burma-genocide/>