

# Rohingyas



## **Tears Down the Cheeks**

Ahmedur Rahman Farooq

**Rohingyas: Tears Down the Cheeks** is a good record of the touching and sad events. I may have different opinion in various aspects of interpretation of the events. Nevertheless, I view that it is a good account in terms of tactics between the junta and anti-junta.

- Dr Shwe Lu Maung

The book – **Rohingyas: Tears Down the Cheeks** – is a brave attempt by Farooq to fill the gap in our understanding of the plight of the Rohingya people. In this book, aside from providing information about the history, culture and politics around the Rohingya people, Farooq offers a first-hand account of Rohingya life inside Arakan.

- Dr Habib Siddiqui

The Rohingya are probably the most friendless people in the world. They just have no one advocating for them at all. Hardly any of them have legal status anywhere in the world.

- Kitty McKinsey

A spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees





## *Dedicated*

To all the distressed mothers, groaning sisters  
and crying children of the oppressed Rohingyas.

## Foreword

The Rohingya community of Arakan, Burma (Myanmar) is one of the most down-trodden ethnic minorities of the world. They are victims of political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural slavery in their ancestral land - Arakan - where they have been living for centuries.

Since the beginning of the 20th century the Rohingyas have been groaning under the crushing wheels of tyranny decades after decades. Ignoring all the irrefutable historical evidences of Rohingyas' glorious past in Arakan, the Rohingyas have been suddenly made an illegal immigrant community in Arakan by the Burmese military regime through an amendment to the Burma citizenship law in 1982.

With the loss of their legitimate right as the bonafide citizens of Burma, the Rohingyas have become homeless in their own home. The authority has been subjecting them to severe persecutions including serious restrictions of their movement even from village to village, ban on their marriage without government permission, religious persecution, extortion, land confiscation and restrictions on access to education. Arakan State is a closed zone for the media and so there is no scope for the world media to cover what is going on with the Rohingyas inside Arakan.

*A life with fear* – is the life of Rohingyas. They pass their life in sub-human condition with half naked body full of hunger and grief. Tears are their permanent companions. They cry in corners and eventually die in silence.

Rohingyas want peace. They want their legitimate right as the ethnic community of Arakan. They want a society which would be free from political oppression, economic exploitation, social anarchy and cultural slavery through the restoration of democracy in Burma. They are in quest of justice and peace. They want to achieve their goals through all peaceful and lawful means.

**Rohingyas: Tears Down the Cheeks** is a collection of some of my articles which have been published by different news media. Despite my limited knowledge and linguistic limitations, I have tried to tell the stories of agonies of the oppressed Rohingyas. I have also tried to tell the stories of agonies of the people of Burma who have been groaning under the military rule decades after decades.

I strongly believe that the Rohingyas, with some 3.5 million population, whose historical presence in Arakan started nearly a millennium ago, will never disappear from the world, simply because they have a language of their own which they will never forget and start using a different language as their mother tongue. As long as they exist in the world, they will speak in their Rohingya language and so their history will run for all the time to come.

Finally, I take my hat off to all the brilliant sons of the **Rohingya Mother** for all their contributions and sacrifices for the peace and human rights of their oppressed community in the past, present and also in the future. I also take my hat off to all those who struggle through all lawful and peaceful means to bring a smile to the distressed humanity.

From the core of my heart all that I wish and pray is a peaceful life for the groaning Rohingyas, a peaceful life for the suffering people of Burma and a peaceful life for the distressed humanity around the world.

Ahmedur Rahman Farooq  
2975, Vang I Valdres, Norway  
Email: [arahman567@gmail.com](mailto:arahman567@gmail.com)

November 10, 2009

## Message from Dr. Shwe Lu Maung

With the hope of overcoming all forms of discrimination Ahmedur Rahman Farooq, a Rohingya youth, has made a laudable attempt in presenting the touching and sad events of his people. These are the heartbreaking true tales of human suffering in an age of civil society and technology. Their name and citizenship being negated, they are nameless and stateless, imprisoned within their own country and uprooted all over the world; a human tragedy of our days. Therefore, the Rohingya issue must find a solution both within and without Myanmar.

The main theme of my message is that my opposition is against the Myanmar Colonialism and my struggle is for a people's republic which is owned and run by the people. I believe that the Rohingya issue can be solved in the principle of '*We the people*'.

Within Myanmar, the founding parents of Myanmar, that is to say the parents and grandparents of my generation, united together against the colonialism and wrested independence with an inspiration of a republic – a people's republic, which will be owned and run by the people. However, the Myanmar people failed to draw a clear demarcation line at the time of the independence in 1948. They failed then, and they still fail now, to see that pre-1948 was feudal and colonial, but post-1948 is a 'republic', which is best explained by Abraham Lincoln when he said "...shall have a new freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from earth" at Gettysburg in 1865.

The *Pyihtaungsu Myanmarnaingan*, or the Union of Myanmar, born in January 1948 was a new freedom for the people of British Burma. Unfamiliar with the newfound liberty, the Myanmar people became divided in the line of their feudal histories and ethnic lineage, and the soil was soaked with blood. In 1950s and 1960s, I grew up amidst the protests and demonstrations in demand of ending the civil war by "talk-and-negotiation".

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(*pyi dwin sit pyi dwin sit tway hson swee nwee yut sae pyit*)

In 1988, a sapling of new hope sprouted from the blood pool. A new generation of the military leadership came into power through the blood bath. General Ne Win belonged to the pre-WWII colonial generation along with my parents. But, Senior Generals Saw Maung and Than Shwe belong to the post-WWII independent generation along with my sister and my brother. They teamed with General Khin Nyunt and others who are my generation. I was in the middle school when I learned to shout "*pyi dwin sit pyi dwin sit tway hson swee nwee yut sae pyit*" in late 1950s. When I reached Rangoon University in 1960 the civil war was still burning hot. I

frequently joined the demonstrations shouting ‘*pyi dwiin sit pyi dwiin sit twey hson swee nwee yut sae pyit*’, all my heart out. We earnestly and eagerly supported the 1964 Peace Talk. However, ironically in 1966-67, I found myself in a guerrilla camp standing against my own brother who was a commissioned officer in Burma Navy. My family suffered a lot from my anti-junta activities. By 1988 both my sister and brother were retired and my brother had long settled in Australia with his family. I quit Myanmar in 1977 and my brother left in 1978. Uprooted and sad it was.

Again with the call of revolution I joined the guerrilla forces in 1988 at the Myanmar-Thai border. Meanwhile in 1989, the University Press Ltd, Dhaka, published my book *Burma Nationalism and Ideology* that I submitted in 1987. I updated the manuscript in early 1989. In that book I put some emphasis on the thoughts of our generations that is from my sister’s to my own days, and mentioned that the civil war could be ended by the new military leaders.

I wrote in page 94 of the original print 1989, “Would they make peace with BCP and National Liberation Forces? Possibly yes! Would there be a coalition government comprising of Army, civilian, BCP and Nationalists? Possibly yes! Would it mean that Burma will make a U-turn back to Democracy? Possibly yes!”. Despite having these expectations I sided with the guerrilla camp in view of a revolution. I was not even a Myanmar citizen anymore at that time but I considered that it was my historical duty to stand by the revolutionary cause. Infamous the military government may be, but it successfully and smartly made five strategic changes, satisfying my expectations to my surprise.

First, it changed the country’s English name from the Union of Burma to the Union of Myanmar. It not only eliminated the last British colonial vestige but also opened up the venue to forge unity under the common cultural umbrella that has origin in Tagaung, in the Kachin Land, since the time immemorial. I grew up with the teaching that says ‘Myanmar origins at Tagaung’. As per chronicles of our ancient Rakkhapura Kingdom, the Second Dhannywadi Dynasty was founded in 900 BCE by Kan Raza Gri, the elder son of Tagaung King, Abi Raza. In the days of the civil war during 1950s and 1960s the country was ruled by the Bama and the process known as the Burmanization was in place strongly in the areas of the Federating Nations who were classified as the *lumyoosu* or subordinate nations by the ruling Burmans. For example, whenever I said, “I am a Rakhaing”, I was subjected to racial vulgar slurs by the Burmans, even within the university campus, just like what the Rohingyas are facing now. We, the *lumyoosu* students or subordinate students demanded that the Bama gave up the throne to stand on the same ground with us as the ‘Citizens of Myanmar’ and let us be all Myanmar. We the *lumyoosu* students proposed that we should abandon the ethnic politics, start citizen or *pyithu* politics and that the Federation we demanded must be in a form of decentralization but not in the line of the ethnic feudalism. This line of political thinking was unpopular and buried in its infancy under the heavy fighting of the communism, socialism and capitalism, accompanied by the ethnic politics of feudal character. Myanmar Colonialism compelled me going into the ethnic guerrilla camp. By 1988, the communism, socialism, and capitalism were all in their death beds with the emergence of open society and open market (Perestroika) promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986. I consider that the change from ‘Burma’ to ‘Myanmar’ is a Bama attempt to give up the throne. It is a strategic move, not a simple tactical one. It puts the ‘*Thakin myo hae doe Bama*’ or ‘We Burman the Lords’ into a cold storage and opens the doors for the ‘Perestroika’.

Second, a peace accord is created in the line of the *pyi dwi sit pyi dwi sit twei hson swee nwee yut sae pyit*. Before the guerrillas and political alliance of the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) could form a solid revolutionary force the SLORC, with a smiling face, offered peace and reconciliation to the major armed political guerrillas such as the Kachin Independent Organization (KIO) and breakaway Kokant and Wa factions of Burma Communist Party. I was at Manerplaw at that time and I told my friend, Comrade Captain Kyaw Hlaing, Chairman of the National United Front of Arakan, “Ako Kyaw Hlaing, we have been defeated strategically!” Kyaw Hlaing was my pal and comrade since my university days and he was trained by KIO in 1969 to lead the Arakan Independence Army (AIA). He replied that we the Arakanese would be left in limbo because we did not have any strategic or tactical clout. He suddenly died in 1995 with a mysterious illness upon his return from a meeting with certain foreign agents. In 1998, his cousin, Saw Tun, a lieutenant in former AIA (1969-1987), and Commander in Arakan Army (1991-1998), was killed at Port Blair, Andaman Islands, by the treacherous Indian Forces.

Third, the junta boldly introduced the multiparty political system. Please note that I do not say a democratic system because a multiparty system does not necessarily mean democracy. The 1990 election was a trap. It was held with no constitution to a non-existing People’s Assembly. I and other revolutionary leaders at Bangla-Myanmar border concluded that the pro-democracy parties would be trapped in the constitution-less chaos. There are only two ways to change a political system, one revolution and another reform. The NLD and allies were prepared for neither. They went for the constitution-less election confirming the junta proposal, but rejected the junta when it asked them to convene a Constituent Assembly for the constitution drafting. The ‘yes-and-no’ action constituted a twisted logic and compromised the opposition strategy in the given time and space. Indeed, the junta said the Military representatives would also sit in the Constituent Assembly, occupying 25% of it. The NLD and its allies rejected the offer with the demand of immediate and absolute power transfer to them. This was a big strategic mistake. See what we get now in 2008 and 2010! The NLD and allies had denounced the revolution calling it violence, a form of terrorism. Once the revolution is opted out the only choice is the reform. Therefore, in the strategic consideration the NLD and allies must have applied the linear logic and accepted the Constituent Assembly. Bargaining and cooperation are the keys for the reform whilst the confrontation poisons it. Their rejection was to the delight of the military leaders who made good use of the opportunity to convene the National Convention, drafted and adopted the Myanmar Constitution 2008. Due to the strategic error made by the NLD and allies in 1990 the reform process was delayed for twenty long years. We should not delay it anymore.

Fourth, the junta opened up the Myanmar market. This surely was a revolutionary light that brightened up the darkness left by Ne Win Socialist Burma. This openness brought entire business world into the fold of the junta. After all, it is the business and resources that matter the world. In the *Capital*, Karl Marx wrote, “Power is economical not political”. The economic sanctions imposed by the West and US did not hurt the junta, but made more jobless, promoting the oldest trades, includes human trafficking. The Rohingyas also fell into the hands of the human traffickers. Economic sanctions never work and are never popular in the face of the principle of free trade and open market. Accordingly, the junta gained more sympathy from the developing and emerging economies. The pro-sanctions stance posed by the NLD and allies could pop up as the ‘anti-working-people’ in the 2010 election.

Fifth, the junta managed Myanmar to become an ASEAN member nation, thus making her stand strong in the confrontation with the West. At the same time, the junta promoted traditional friendship with Japan, China, India and Vietnam. It also, after recalling Myanmar founding membership, renewed its membership of the Non-Aligned Movement. These smart moves made the junta strong on the international stage but pushed the NLD and allies into the unpopular corner of Western protégé. The fact is that the world is just recovering from the injuries inflicted upon them by the European Colonialism, American Imperialism, and Cold War. People everywhere do not want to see the return of the vampires to a former victim. Now, ASEAN has decided to become a 'union' in the style of the European Union. This is the future Myanmar people have to look forward and strive for.

As for the Rohingyas the world remains dark whatsoever may be taking place in Myanmar or elsewhere. This is despite the fact that in all the political episodes described above the Muslims of Myanmar participated actively, in the rebellion and revolution as well as in the elections from 1948 to date. They are part and parcel of the Myanmar people and politics. Nonetheless, racial and religious discrimination against them is institutionalized in the society, especially against those who identify themselves as the Rohingyas. The junta alienates them with the policy that the Rohingyas are not a National Race of Myanmar. One Myanmar diplomat described them 'dark and ugly like ogres'. Under this situation, the Rohingyas look up at the NLD and allies for their human rights and citizen rights. To their great dismay, not only the NLD and allies (especially ALD) but also all pro-democracy parties and forces also dehumanize them with the false charges of illegal Bengali immigrants and cruelly call them niggers, virus, Muslim terrorists, and strayed dogs etc.

I was aware of the Rohingya issue since 1958. I have supported their rights all along. I have given a good account of them in my book, *The Price of Silence*. All along these days, I have maintained that the Rohingya issue must be solved within the principle of "We the people" inside a people's republic that is owned and run by the people. The big question now is: Will the Myanmar Constitution 2008, a quasi-federation and semi-feudal law with promises of human rights, allow the Rohingya issue in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw? The Myanmar Constitution 2008 Chapters I and VIII contain promising provisions, some excerpts are given below.

### **Chapter I:**

#### **Basic Principles of the Union**

21. (a) Every citizen shall enjoy the right of equality, the right of liberty and the right of justice, as prescribed in this Constitution.

34. Every citizen is equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practise religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Constitution.

### **Chapter VIII**

#### **Citizen, Fundamental Rights and Duties of the Citizens**

354. Every citizen shall be at liberty in the exercise of the following rights, if not contrary to the

laws, enacted for Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquility or public order and morality:

- (a) to express and publish freely their convictions and opinions;
- (b) to assemble peacefully without arms and holding procession;
- (c) to form associations and organizations;
- (d) to develop their language, literature, culture they cherish, religion they profess, and customs without prejudice to the relations between one national race and another or among national races and to other faiths.

355. Every citizen shall have the right to settle and reside in any place within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar according to law.

362. The Union also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism as the religions existing in the Union at the day of the coming into operation of this Constitution.

363. The Union may assist and protect the religions it recognizes to its utmost.

364. The abuse of religion for political purposes is forbidden. Moreover, any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity or discord between racial or religious communities or sects is contrary to this Constitution. A law may be promulgated to punish such activity. (Quotes end here).

The key is to decide to take part or not in the 2010 election. It is a fact, nothing but the fact, that democracy evolves. Look at the United States of America, Republic of India, and Kingdom of Thailand. The former two countries advance their democracy through various constitutional amendments towards a more prefect union. Interestingly, Thai people simply write a new constitution whenever they are unhappy with the old one, so far from 1932 to date 17 constitutions, the 2007 Constitution being the latest. Therefore, it is reasonable for the Myanmar people to accept a starting point. The Myanmar constitution 2008 is more promising than the 1947 and 1974 constitutions. It meets the demand of the federating nations with statehood complete with State or Provincial Legislature and Government. Autonomous and Self-governing territories are included. The most unacceptable or undemocratic provision is the military occupation of 25% of the legislature. This signifies the political reality of Myanmar, which still is a prisoner of feudalism and internal colonialism (Myanmar colonialism). We must accept this political reality and strive for a better civil and democratic society with smart strategies and tactics. At the same time, the Chapter IV, Section 109 will protect Myanmar from the absolute military totalitarianism, which is a bitter fruit of Myanmar Colonialism. In this regard it must be accepted as a positive point. After all, why should 75 people representatives fear to face 25 military representatives inside the parliament? Every Member of Parliament has parliamentary immunity.

One more concern is the difficulty of the constitution amendment (Chapter XII, Section 436a&b). The concern is due to the assumption that 25 military representatives will make a single voice and vote in a body, at all issues, at all time. However, parliament is not a military battleground. The military high command cannot but may order them how to vote. The parliamentarians, though in uniform, do not have to obey the command; they are also protected

by the parliamentary immunity. They cannot be court-martialed on account of their action inside the parliament. It will all depend on the statesmanship of the civilian parliamentarians.

I agree with Professor Maung Maung Gyi's conclusion that Myanmar is a hierarchical society. In a hierarchical society a change, whether it be social, cultural or political, is a function of generation rather than a revolution or renovation. The present military elders, who were born in 1930s or in 1950s will retire or die within ten years. Then will come a new generation of the leaders who were born within 1960s and 1980s. That is when we can expect another visible change. I do not ask you to sit and wait but I urge you to strive diligently with wisdom and patience for political liberalism.

In over all consideration, I would like to see that Myanmar people work within the adopted Myanmar Constitution 2008 and go for the 2010 election. I consider that emergence of a civil society where the rule of law will prevail with due human rights is possible, especially so because Myanmar now is strategically bound by the ASEAN Charter. For my Rohingya friends, my suggestion will be to tactfully put up a sustainable civil rights movement following the strategies and tactics of the great African American leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) and work for a better future in the ASEAN Union. There will be a great deal of give-and-take to be considered. Statesmanship is much in demand.

Without Myanmar, that is to say in the world outside Myanmar, there are unconfirmed statistics saying more than two million displaced Rohingyas, the same number as of the Rohingyas in the Rakhine State within Myanmar. You will read all about them in this book of Ahmedur Rahman Farooq. Who will take care of the displaced Rohingyas? The Bhutanese refugees inside Nepal are there since 1990, the Palestinian refugees since 1948, about eleven million African refugees are perishing in the camps scattered across Africa. Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee>) cites that there are 62 million world refugees and 43 millions internally displaced. Still, we see the world is generating more refugees every day. In this matter the Rohingyas have to work for an honorable return to their homeland or resettlement in a third country. The United Nations, whether we like it or not, appears to be the only body that can negotiate either the honorable return or resettlement. The Rohingyas ought to form a united body for lobbying at the United Nations and responsible countries.

Finally, I would like to thank Ahmedur Rahman Farooq for his sincere effort in making a remarkable book on the suffering of the Rohingya people. With these words I convey my esteemed regards and best wishes to the Rohingya people, who are the Muslim descendants of our Arakan Empire (1430-1784 CE), and hope that they, with due human dignity and honor, will be able to get integrated in the Myanmar mainstream as well as in the ASEAN Union, in the principle of 'We the people'. This is an age of global citizenry in the States beyond the Nation States.

**Shwe Lu Maung, Ph.D.**

Missouri, USA

November 26, 2009

## Message from Dr. Habib Siddiqui

The Rohingya people of Arakan are the worst sufferers of human rights violations in the 21st century, and yet very little is known about their suffering in the outside world. The all powerful media rarely mentions them, as if the Rohingyas are the forgotten people of our time. Greedy about trade relations with the culprit SPDC regime, now ruling Burma (Myanmar), her neighbors have chosen to ignore the plight of these unfortunate human beings, who must now choose between living in hell in a place called the Arakan state of Burma and a life of an unwanted, illegal refugee outside Burma. They must brave the trigger happy NASAKA guards to cross the borders and enter illegal territories, sometimes in boats but most of the time on feet. In that process of exodus, they may die of hunger and thirst or end up in jails of their refuge. In the last few years alone, thousands have embraced that unfortunate fate of extinction. And yet, the world conscious has not gotten the better of this tragedy to either demand and force a change inside Burma that would ensure citizenship of the Rohingya people and allow them to live as free citizens, un-abused, un-harassed and protected by the government of Myanmar or ask international communities to allow the fleeing refugees to live honorably.

There are very few books available in a western language that are written about the Rohingyas of Burma. And fewer yet are books that are written by the Rohingyas themselves writing about their own inhuman experience either within the state of Arakan (now Rakhine state) of Burma or outside Burma as an unwanted refugee. Ahmedur Rahman Farooq is a Rohingya human rights activist who now lives in Norway. The book – **Rohingyas: Tears Down the Cheeks** – is a brave attempt by Farooq to fill the gap in our understanding of the plight of the Rohingya people. In this book, aside from providing information about the history, culture and politics around the Rohingya people, Farooq offers a first-hand account of Rohingya life inside Arakan. I recommend this book to anyone interested in broadening understanding of minority people living inside Burma.

**Dr. Habib Siddiqui**  
**USA**

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*Dr. Habib Siddiqui is a Human rights activist, a prominent scholar and author of nine books and more than 400 articles.*

## *Contents*

(1) The Bali Process & R2P: Who is to Protect the Rohingyas?	Page: 13 - 16
(2) 8888: A Grisly Episode of an Epic Struggle	Page: 17 - 19
(3) How to Stop Human Rights Violations against Rohingyas	Page: 20 - 24
(4) Keeping the Flame of Saffron Revolution Alive	Page: 25 - 28
(5) Genocidal Operations against Rohingyas	Page: 29 - 32
(6) Burma Heading Towards the Worst	Page: 33 - 35
(7) The Curse of Historical Rivalries in Arakan State of Burma	Page: 36 - 39
(8) The Failure of Gambari Mission in Burma	Page: 40 - 42
(9) SOS from Starving Rohingyas in Bangladesh-Burma border	Page: 43 - 46
(10) Min Ko Naing: A Voice of Defiance and a Voice of Hope	Page: 47 - 50
(12) The Death of Justice for Rohingyas	Page: 51 - 54
(11) The Draft Constitution of Burma's Military Rulers	Page: 55 - 57
(13) U Kyaw Min of Burma: An MP without Citizenship	Page: 58 - 62
(14) Escape of People of Burma through the Tunnels of Death	Page: 63 - 65
(15) Relocation of Rohingyas in a Deserted Island in Thailand	Page: 66 - 68
(16) Faces of Burma's Refugee: Children Behind the Prison Bars	Page: 69 - 72
(17) The Strategic Retreat of Burma's Military Rulers	Page: 73 - 77
(18) Rakhine-Rohingya Friendship Hospital: A Short Story	Page: 78 - 82
(19) The Gambari Mission: A Failed Bid?	Page: 83 - 85
(20) Arakan: The Land	Page: 86 - 88
(21) The Cultural Affinity of Rohingyas with Bengal	Page: 89 - 97
(22) What is the actual population of Rohingyas?	Page: 98 - 99
(23) Rohingyas' Plight: The Cruel Fate of Rawnak	Page: 100 - 102
(24) The Case of Rohingya Undocumented Refugees in Bangladesh	Page: 103 - 105
(25) Farewell to Motherland.	Page: 106 - 107
(26) Rohingyas in the World Media	Page: 108 - 122
(27) Rohingyas: The Cries of Andaman #	Page: 123 - 126



N.B: The printed version of this book is expected to come up by July 01, 2010. If there is any case of copyright, it is requested to contact me directly at [arahman567@gmail.com](mailto:arahman567@gmail.com) and [arahman567@yahoo.com](mailto:arahman567@yahoo.com) before June 30, 2010.

## The Bali Process & R2P: Who is to Protect the Rohingyas?

**Dated: 2009-04-04 09:16:01**

The Responsibility to Protect the populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity is an international commitment by governments to prevent and react to grave crises, wherever they may occur. In 2005, world leaders agreed, for the first time, that states have a primary responsibility to protect their own populations and that the international community has a responsibility to act when these governments fail to protect the vulnerable populations.

There is no denying the fact that the ASEAN has failed to address the root causes of the Rohingya problem.

Now the Rohingya problem is set to be discussed in the forthcoming Bali Process Meeting to be held on April 14-15, 2009. The Bali Process brings together more than 50 countries, mainly Asian, to work on practical measures to help combat transnational crime, human

trafficking and smuggling in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Burma is not a member of the Bali Process. The IOM and the UNHCR are part of the secretariat and help facilitate the group's meetings.



But most importantly, the Rohingya problem is not simply a case of human trafficking. It is purely political. Its root causes are far beyond the issues of the Bali Process. Any effort to find out a solution to the Rohingya problem under the framework of human trafficking will simply disappoint the entire Rohingya community and at the same time will mislead the international community about the root causes of the Rohingya problem. It will either serve as cutting the heads of Rohingyas to remove the Rohingya headache or it will be a failed effort to cure a deep rooted scar of the Rohingyas with an ointment.

The Rohingya community of Arakan, Burma is one of the most down-trodden ethnic minorities of the world. They are victims of political oppression, economic exploitation, cultural slavery and communal violence in their ancestral land Arakan where they have been

living for centuries. Their presence in Arakan can be historically traced back to the 7th century. The military regime has turned Arakan into a concentration camp for the Rohingyas. Their plight is one of the most under-reported humanitarian crises of the world.

In order to annihilate the entire Rohingya populations from Arakan, the Burmese regime has stripped their legitimate right to the citizenship of Burma through an amendment to the country's citizenship law in 1982 on the pretext that the Rohingyas are the Bengali immigrants simply because they are closely related linguistically, culturally and religiously with the people of the greater Chittagong of Bangladesh which has a border of 208 km with the Arakan State of Burma. The Burmese regime alleges that *'In the time of the British government, it was that the British brought Bengalis and Indians of India (now Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) into the nation with various intentions. ....The British ruled Rakine State (Arakan) for 123 years from 1827 to 1948. During that period, Bengalis entered the nation en masse.'*

However, being victims of systematic genocidal operations and gross human rights violations like a ban on marriage without government permission, severe restrictions of movement, religious persecution, extortion, land confiscation, restrictions on access to education, etc., the Rohingyas have been fleeing Burma everyday. Being crowded in hundreds in rickety wooden boats, they try to escape persecutions and grinding poverty and wash ashore in countries like Thailand and Indonesia. Being uprooted from their ancestral land Arakan, today over 1.5 million Rohingyas are leading a gypsy life in different countries of the world without any official recognition as refugees. Due to the lack of the official papers, they are often subject to arrest, detention, punishment for immigration offences and deportation.

In an article titled "Burma's Muslim Rohingya Minority Dwell at the *"Brink of Extermination"*", Benedict Rogers, the Deputy Chairman of the UK Conservative Party's Human Rights Commission and the Advocacy Officer of the CSW for South Asia, said, "A senior UN official, who has served in Darfur and other humanitarian crisis situations and who, in the words of a foreign diplomat, "knows human misery when he sees it", recently described the situation in northern Arakan as "as bad as anything he has seen in terms of the denial of basic human freedoms". Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which works in northern Arakan State and has also operated in the camps for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, has described the Rohingya as one of the ten world populations in danger of extinction."

Mr. Benedict Rogers also writes, "If Burma as a whole is under-reported, the people on its western borders are almost unknown to the world. Journalists, activists and aid agencies who visit the region tend to head for the Thailand-Burma border, where access to refugees, displaced people and democracy groups is greatest. Few visit Burma's borders with India, where a famine is unfolding, or with China, where women are trafficked into prostitution, and fewer still make it to the Bangladesh border where a slow, forgotten genocide is taking place."

However, in the wake of the recent Andaman tragedy of the Rohingya boat people where hundreds of Rohingyas have perished in the deep sea after being towed by the Thai Navy to international waters, the Burmese military regime has reiterated its position not to accept the Rohingyas as the citizens of Burma. The graphic pictures of the desperate, skeletal Rohingyas aboard old boats without engines, who bobbed aimlessly at sea for weeks, without sufficient food and water, after having been beaten, towed out, and abandoned, have rocked the world conscience.

During the 14th ASEAN Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand, between Feb 27 and March 1, 2009, the Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said, quoting his Burmese counterpart Nyan Win, that Burma was ready to take back the Rohingya migrants if they could prove they were of Bengali descent, even though the Burmese military regime had snatched away Rohingyas' right to citizenship of Burma simply branding them as the descendants of the Bengalis and thus denied them of their ethnic status. On March 22, 2009, the Thai Foreign Minister paid a visit to Burma in an effort to solve the Rohingya problem but the outcome was status quo. On March 16-17, 2009, the Burmese Prime Minister Gen Thein Sein paid an official visit to Indonesia where Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono raised the Rohingya issue with the Burmese Prime Minister, but there was no solution to the problem.

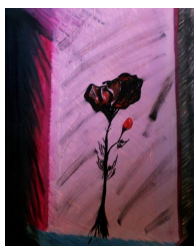
Last February, the ASEAN secretary general, Mr. Surin said in an exclusive interview, "The Rohingya issue is a very complicated challenge to the entire region of Southeast Asia." The Rohingya issue featured prominently in bilateral talks in the south Asian region in February. The US Secretary for State Hillary Clinton discussed the matter during meetings with both the Indonesian president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and the foreign minister, Hasan Wirajuda. The Thai Army chief Anupong Paojinda reportedly raised the issue with the Burmese junta's leader General Than Shwe when he visited the Burmese capital Naypyidaw in February. The Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva also compared notes with his Indonesian counterpart during his visit to Jakarta. Addressing the issue of the stateless Rohingyas for the first time, the Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "We must address this (Rohingya issue) seriously. ASEAN will lose credibility if we are unable to sort out a problem in our own region."

There is no doubt that a regional solution is needed to cure this chronic humanitarian crisis of the Rohingyas. In order for it to be effective, it must be carefully designed – otherwise, it can plunge Rohingyas into deeper suffering, cause resistance amongst host societies, and fail at stemming the onward movement of Rohingyas into the region.

Firstly, Burma and all other member states of the ASEAN or the Bali Process must recognize that the Rohingya problem is purely a political problem. They must drop the idea that the Rohingya problem might have emerged from economic problems and they also must drop the use of the phrase '**Bengalis**' which the Burmese regime uses for **Rohingyas**. They must recognize that Rohingyas are not Bengalis. They are an ethnic group of Arakan of Burma that has been living in their ancestral land for centuries. They did not wash ashore in Arakan from the Indian ocean or the Bay of Bengal. Until Gen Ne Win's military takeover in 1962,

their ethnic status was recognized by the democratic government of U Nu. Back then they had political representatives, a right to vote, a role in the Union Day Celebrations, and a Rohingya language program in the official Burma Broadcasting Service (BBS).

However, as a part of the **Responsibilities to Protect (R2P)**, it is extremely important for the international community to let the Rohingyas live in this earth as the bonafide citizens of Burma enjoying their human rights through: (1) recognition of the Rohingyas as one of the ethnic indigenous groups of Burma and to restore their legitimate rights to the citizenship of the Union of Burma; (2) abrogation of all discriminatory measures taken by the Burmese authority against the Rohingyas and to take steps to stop all human rights violations against the Rohingyas; (3) creation of a congenial atmosphere for the peaceful coexistence of all communities of Arakan particularly the Rohingyas and Rakhines; (4) creation of a congenial atmosphere for the safe return of the Rohingyas in exile to their original hearths and homes with the guarantee of their all out security in Burma under a democratic government; and (5) facilitation of a tripartite agreement among three parties (a) the Rohingya representatives (b) the Burmese authority and (c) the UNHCR on the issues of the above four clauses for the protection of the Rohingyas -- both at home and abroad -- and to allow the UNHCR and other international bodies to fully function in Arakan to supervise the protection of Rohingyas as long as the Rohingya representatives deem such necessary.#



## 8888: A Grisly Episode of an Epic Struggle

Dated: 2008-08-18 09:06:47

8888 - The massacre of August 8, 1988 is a "turning point in the history" of Burma and it has laid the ground-works for the "second struggle for the independence" of Burma as the daughter of Burma's independence hero Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said. The bloods of the 8888 martyrs and tears of their mothers have laid the foundation of the protests, which have drawn thousands of ordinary people onto the streets around the country over the last two decades.

It was an unprecedented uprising of the common people from all walks of life against the tyrannical rule of General Ne Win who seized power in 1962 overthrowing a democratic government and then unleashed a reign of terror all over the country. Millions of democracy seeking people of Burma including students, monks, teachers, government employees, farmers and even house wives marched throughout the country calling for an end to the military rule.



The warning of Gen Ne Win came, "*I want all the*

*people of the country to know.....if you gather as crowds and kick up a fuss, the military will shoot so as to hit the target. It doesn't shoot into the air to scare people.*" But the protest movement did not stop. The fire of protest flared all over the country. The army moved to crush the uprising with merciless violence. They shot hundreds of protesters on this day of August 8, 1988 and indiscriminately massacred thousands in the following weeks. The streets ran with the bloods of the democracy seeking people where some 3,000 people are believed to have been killed even though the top military sources admitted later that at least 10,000 people perished. A military intelligence officer close to the former intelligence chief, General Kin Nyunt who is now under house arrest, told a few years ago that General Kin Nyunt's own assessment was that more than 10,000 people were killed. "Many bodies were quietly cremated so that there was no evidence of the massacre," he said.

In fact, this massacre has shaped a continuous movement of the pro-democracy activists against the military regime which has been going on since then both inside and outside Burma. The military regime crushed the rebellion of the peace loving people of Burma. They have put the icon of democracy, peace and liberty Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in detention years after years even in violation of the law which they have framed to suppress the political opponents, captivated more than 2,000 political prisoners in their hellish prisons and labor camps. But they could not crush the peace loving spirit of the millions of the common people of Burma. They are continuing their fight against the oppressive rule. And more importantly, the 8888 Uprising has paved the way for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to emerge as the undisputed leader of the people of Burma. Suffice to say that the 8888 has earned the pro-democracy people of Burma an indomitable courage and determination to snatch away the sun of liberty today, tomorrow of day after tomorrow.

Beyond its numerical value, the 8888 is not only a date, but a tragic phenomenon in the life of the people of Burma. It has tremendous symbolism. It saw the blood of innocent civilians spilled by the soldiers of their own country. The 8888 was both a dirge and a defiance, a funeral procession and a rebellion. It is the eternal fountain of inspiration for the people of Burma and at the same time a phenomenon of endless grief. The supreme sacrifice of the 8888 heroes have produced hundreds of thousands of strong voices who have been continuously causing stumbling blocs for the Burmese generals on their way to enjoy absolute control in the country.

It is true that the military regime successfully crushed the people's rebellion against their despotic rule, not due to the lack of courage and determination or due to the lack of popular support or due to the lack of a charismatic leader like Daw Suu Kyi, but it was simply because the army was prepared to do whatever it takes to protect their rule and to kill as many people as it takes to quash the rebellion.

The 8888 was the beginning of the epic struggle of the people of Burma for freedom. It was the big bang that defined the course of the protest of the people over the last two decades. It has extolled the courage immanent in the democracy seeking people of Burma and to take a determined stand to oust the autocracy out of the state machinery at any cost.

The 8888 shook the base of the military regime. It toppled the long-time dictator Ne Win, even though a new group of generals snatched power and crushed the protests. The grim episode of the 8888 has caused an incurable hemorrhage to the rank and file of the state machinery. The military regime knows very well the country is constantly seething with anger against their despotic rule and it can lead to an outburst at any moment and on any occasion. Therefore, as the anniversary of the 8888 Uprising drew near, the military regime deployed troops and security officials in major cities and increased security measures across the country, fearing a repetition of the demonstrations of 1988 or the Saffron Revolution of 2007. Thousands of heavily-armed security forces have been moved to the outskirts of Rangoon days before the twentieth anniversary of the uprising.

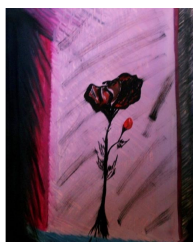
They detained many activists who marched in the streets to commemorate the anniversary. Police raided the monasteries in different parts of the country. In Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State, the riot police besieged the Bura Gri temple which is the main temple in the city where monks gathered from different monasteries to stage a demonstration. The newly appointed western command commander, General Thaung Aye rushed to Sittwe to take control of the situation in the event that any protests take place in Arakan State.

However, since 1988, the common people of Burma stand in stiff salute to those who have sacrificed their life to rid the country from the military octopus. The peace loving people of Burma commemorate it every year within an adverse state risking their life. They paint graffiti in red on walls and buildings urging people to remember the 1988 uprising. They pray and offer foods to the monks to give merit to the martyrs.

On this day, the pro-democracy groups renew their pledge and resolve to fight with rock-solid unity for restoration of peace, stability and democracy in Burma. They swear by the martyrs to continue their struggle until the second phase of independence is achieved even though sometimes they rise and stumble and fall but determined to rise again. The bloods of so many martyrs can never go in vain. It gives rebirth to the optimism that the people of Burma will stand up again and again to rid the country from the despotic rule of the generals who have been drinking the bloods of the people of Burma decades after decades or as Joanna Fuchs said in her poem '*The Tyrants*':

*The tyrants are loose again;  
They hate all but their own.  
They give their lives to kill us,  
To scatter our blood and bone.*

*They care not whom they murder,  
Whether woman, man or child;  
Their minds are full of fury;  
Their sickness has gone wild.#*



## How to Stop Human Rights Violations against Rohingyas

**Dated: 2008-03-02 08:46:22**

The Rohingya community of Arakan, Burma is one of the most down-trodden ethnic minorities of the world. They are victim of political oppression, economic exploitation, cultural slavery and communal violence in their ancestral land Arakan where they have been living centuries after centuries.

Arakan which is a land of one of the most fertile regions in Asia with great variety of unexplored resources, has turned into a land of bloods and tears since the beginning of the 20th century where the Rohingyas have been groaning under the crushing wheels of either state sponsored terrorists or the religious fanatics decades after decades.



### **Restoration of Democracy in Burma:**

There is no denying the fact that it is the lack of democratic atmosphere which has closed all the doors for the restoration of human rights of Rohingyas. Despite the continuous outcries of the international peace loving community to restore peace and democracy in Burma, the military regime has been continuously playing game to defuse the international outrage and to trample the people of Burma under the military boots for an indefinite period. Refusing to hand over power to the overwhelmingly elected representatives of the people of Burma during the General Election of 1990, detaining the national icon of democracy, peace and liberty, Daw Aung San Suu Kyie and all other popular leaders of democratic movement and ethnic minorities years after years and brutally cracking down all anti military protests, the Generals have demonstrated the world that there is no words like "human rights" in their vocabulary and they have no interest to learn what democracy or civil liberty means. So, the restoration of democracy in Burma is a precondition to stop human rights violations against the Rohingyas.

### **Restoration of Citizenship of Rohingyas:**

Nevertheless, as a part of groundwork for any sort of human rights violations against Rohingyas under the aegis of law, the most notorious action which the military rulers have done is the amendment to the country's Citizenship Law in 1982 which has reduced the Rohingyas to the status of a Stateless Gypsy Community of the world, depriving them of citizenship and making them illegal immigrants in their ancestral motherland where they have been living for centuries having a long history, a language, a heritage, a culture and a tradition of their own that they had built up in their motherland through the ages of existence which can be traced back to the 7th Century.

Under the aegis of this notorious law, the military rulers have adopted all sorts of mechanism to turn Arakan into a "Rohingya-less" land through the series of genocidal operations and all other sorts of human rights violations. Through this act, the military regime has incited racism, xenophobia, inequality, intolerance and discrimination against the Rohingya, depriving them of their fundamental rights to citizenship, movement, education, job, marriage, property, healthcare and other civic liberty. So, in order to restore human rights of Rohingyas, it is the foremost need for the government of Burma to annul the black amendment of citizenship law of 1982 and to sign and ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and to remove all the obstacles in the way to let the Rohingyas enjoy the right to citizenship as well as for all their children who were born in exile as both documented or undocumented refugees.

### **Restoration of Communal Harmony in Arakan:**

Another heinous tactics that the military rulers have been engaged in since the military take over of Gen. Ne Win in 1962 to exterminate Rohingyas from Arakan, is to fuel extreme communal frenzy among the Rakhines and Rohingyas in Arakan. The people of Arakan, who had been once living in peace and perfect amity, have to witness many often recurrent phenomena of communal violence, social anarchy and widespread unrest goaded by the despotic military rulers.

Today, Arakan is a land of communal enmity and hatred which has reached at such a scale that the Rohingyas can hardly pass through Rakhine localities. The movement of Rohingyas from one place to another by buses, launches or steamers is always full of risks and hazards. Thousands of highly Rohingya educated personalities have fallen victims of assassination at the hands of a section of the Rakhine communalists. In fact, it is the military regime which has turned the land into an earthly hell where tens of thousands of innocent human beings are being offered as the requiem of the communal conflagration. So, without restoration of communal harmony between the two sister communities of Arakan, the Rohingyas and

Rakhines, any effort to stop human rights violations against the Rohingyas, is bound to end in debacle. Peace can prevail in Arakan only when these two communities will be able to create an atmosphere where they can live in peaceful coexistence like two petals of a flower.

#### **Presence of International Agencies in Arakan:**

However, in Arakan which has been tormented decades after decades by the military rulers during the long 46 years of Reign of Terror, the matter of restoration of human rights of Rohingyas can not be imagined without the presence of monitoring agencies of international bodies including the UNHCR and ILO who must have full access to each and every corner of Arakan to see for themselves what is going on the people of Arakan as well as the Rohingyas. They must have full freedom to carry out their international mandate and also to monitor all the situations which have been going on in reality.

Furthermore, the authorities must abrogate all black laws which serve as the tools for the violations of human rights against the civilians including the Rohingyas and they must fully comply with the UN Declaration of Human Rights and other covenants like Health ICESCR (International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) where as per Article 12.1: everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Shelter ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) where as per Article 12.1: everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence and Livelihood ICESCR where as per Article 6.1: everyone has the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.

Most importantly, the authority must abolish the practice of forced labor in compliance with the 1930 International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention on Forced Labor and as per the recommendation of the ILO, the government must repeal the sections of the *Village and Towns Acts* that legally sanctions the conscription of labor. The government also must protect the Children's rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. Children must not be forced to work under any circumstances and they must abrogate all written or unwritten rules which stand as the stumbling block for Rohingya students to get education. They must give up all practices which compel Rohingyas to go gradually away from their ethnic culture, heritage as well as language. All Rohingya students must have their right to retain their own Rohingya name and no Rohingya student will be compelled to adopt a Burmese name which, in fact, has been serving as a tool for the military rulers in their way to Burmanization.

### **Presence of NGOs in Arakan:**

Arakan which has turned out to be a land of restlessness, antagonism, discrimination, persecution, anarchy and disappointment during the long military rule and where the peace-loving people pass their life in utmost grief and distress, fear and frustration, the voice of restoration of human rights of Rohingyas can be a far cry there, if the NGOs are not allowed to work for alleviation of sufferings of all the hapless people including the Rohingyas.

It is the NGOs which can heal at least some level of scars caused by despotic rule over the decades pushing tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children towards disasters. Through their grassroots level activities, the NGOs can play a significant role in changing the life of the distressed human beings from the wounds caused by the systemic oppression, socio-economic and political exploitation and social anarchy as well as the havocs of the communal violence.

The NGOs can play a major role in restoration of human rights of Rohingyas if they are allowed to work in Arakan through multidimensional programs like emergency relief, food security and agriculture, infrastructure and health and education. Under the emergency relief program, the NGOs can concentrate to the internally displaced Rohingyas. They can pay special attention and concentration to reduce mortality and morbidity and help the distressed people to return to normalcy and let them understand the fact that human rights are not the mercy of a state and that as per Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993 which clearly states that “States declare that human rights are the *legitimate concern* of the international community”, human rights obligations are voluntarily confirmed obligations of states or nations towards populations within their jurisdiction, and this obligates States or nations to have consistent efforts and strive towards a complete spectrum of human rights - starting from an effective ‘right to health,’ within the availability of States resources to the absolute prohibition of torture.

### **Presence of human rights groups in Arakan:**

Another important aspect for the restoration of human rights of Rohingyas is to allow different human rights organizations to be present in Arakan where human rights violations have turned out to be a common phenomenon during the decades-long military rule.

In fact, Human Rights and Human Survival are inalienably linked. In concrete terms, the endurance of the society is a human right. But this basic human right to live with peace and security, liberty and equality and prosperity cannot be rejuvenated by any government faced with all those factors which endanger the peaceful living of human society. Violence can be termed as one sort of violation of norms of human behaviour recognised by all civilized people of the world. By spreading violence and panic among people, it hits the very roots of democracy. So every society cherishing the democratic way of life is bound to fight any sort

of violence and cause panic. Therefore, the implementation of human rights had come to be acknowledged internationally as a major concern and essential in the development of not only the individual but also the nation and, ultimately the world.

So, there can be no meaningful improvement in the restoration of human rights of Rohingyas without the presence of human rights organizations in Arakan who can serve as the watchdogs of all sorts of violations of human rights, whether that violation comes from government, from terrorists, from criminals, or from self-appointed messiahs operating under the cover of politics or religion.

### **Presence of News Media in Arakan:**

Robert Heinlein said, secrecy is the beginning of tyranny. It is the news media which mainly bring most of the secrets to the surface. A journalist witnesses an incident, films it and releases it and thus opens the eye of people, organizations and governments as well as the international community through his report, his video and other online technologies about the human rights violations and thus, he brings a change in the society and in a nation.

The news media play an immense role in the restoration of human rights of a community or a nation. It has an unimaginable power to organize the "people power" against any injustice and tyranny and build a culture of freedom. Moreover, the role that the broadcast media plays in changing the face of a society is beyond description. Because of satellite links which now enable broadcast news organizations to originate live programming from any part of the globe, the entire world is becoming one "global village" as Marshall McLuhan said or as the famous line of Shakespeare "all the world's a stage".

Nevertheless, in a country which the military rulers have turned into a secret state of terror where human rights are constantly violated and where the guns of the army point out the way of life of the people, the voice for the presence of human rights groups or news media organizations in Arakan is a far cry. It is only a democratic atmosphere which can pave the way to stop human rights violations against Rohingyas and bring an end to the chapter of genocide and ethnic cleansing operations against them. #



## Keeping the Flame of Saffron Revolution Alive

**Dated: 2008-09-05 08:44:26**

The violent crackdown of the Saffron Revolution in September 2007 has added a deep notch in the scale of atrocities of the Burmese military rulers. It is true that the Saffron Revolution could not remove the regime from the power, but it has so badly wounded the regime that they will never be able to heal the scar.

Earlier, people witnessed the brutalities of the military regime mostly on the unarmed civilians, but the crackdown of the Saffron Revolution has demonstrated to the people how brutally they can kill, torture and suppress the monks whom the people of Burma hold in the highest regards and reverence. It has seriously attacked the senses of the common people and caused a permanent disgust among them against the regime. Every year September will come to remind them the scale of brutalities of the military regime on the monks. The brutal oppression of the regime and the bloods of the monks spilled in the streets have opened the eyes of the people to see the true identity of the regime and woke them up once again from psychological derailment tactics of the junta.



The immediate cause of the Saffron Revolution was mainly the sudden removal of the fuel subsidies. On August 15, 2007 the government removed subsidies on fuel causing a rapid and unannounced increase in prices. The government, which has a monopoly on fuel sales and is sold only by a state-owned fuel company – Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, raised prices from about \$1.40 to \$2.80 a gallon, and boosted the price of natural gas by about 500%. This increase in fuel prices led to an increase in food prices and brought a disastrous situation for the common people in maintaining their livelihoods. The price of rice had jumped 10 percent, meat 15 percent, and a standard plate of noodles at a food stall had tripled. By the end of September, the price of a kilogram of rice had increased from around 300 kyat to 500 kyat, while a dozen eggs had doubled in price from 600 kyat to 1,200 kyat. People could no longer afford to buy rice and started to eat rice soup. And those who could not even afford to eat rice soup, they just started to eat corn.

The United Nations ranked Burma among the 20 poorest countries of the world and for the economic distress of the country, many including the UN blamed the military regime and the proportion of national income spent on the armed forces. In late 2006, the cost of basic commodities began rising sharply in Burma with rice, eggs, and cooking oil increasing by 30-40%. According to the UN, one in three children is chronically malnourished, government spending on health and education is among the lowest anywhere in the world, and the average income is below \$300 a year. Amidst this precarious condition of the common people, the luxurious life style of the army personnel came up as one of the most talked about issues of the country.

The plight of the common people seriously attacked the sense of the monks and finally they took to the streets and the protest became known as Saffron Revolution. The Saffron Revolution was a series of anti-government protest which started on August 15, 2007 and continued up to October 2007. Initially, being led by students and opposition political activists, the protest demonstrations were at first dealt with quickly and harshly by the junta, with dozens of protesters arrested and detained. Later, thousands of Buddhist monks took to the streets to protest the despotic rule which has generated a desperate situation in the country forcing millions of people to live in grinding poverty with half naked body full of hunger and grief. Carrying the Buddhist flag, the protesting monks marched through the streets of Rangoon and in all other major cities of the country and chanted the "*Metta Sutta*" (the Buddha's words on loving kindness).

It was a stunning show of defiance against the military regime and it was the largest anti-government protest in twenty years since 1988. In many places the columns of the protesting monks stretched up to 1 kilometer where the civilians – men and women were seen marching the streets forming a human shield around the monks keeping the monks in the middle and the ordinary people either side as if they were ready to receive the shower of bullets first before it can hit the revered monks.

The government moved to silence the protest through all brutal means. Thousands of troops converged on foot and trucks in different areas of Rangoon, Mandalay, Sittwe and elsewhere to crack down on the demonstration. According to UN estimates, more than 3,000 protesters were arrested and at least 31 people were killed in the crackdown. Monasteries became the target of the daily raid of the army. They imprisoned many highly respected senior monks as the instigator of the protest. Many of the imprisoned monks were high ranking abbots of monasteries who spent even 30 to 40 years in teaching the *Buddha Śāsana* - the teachings of the Buddha. In the prisons, their robes were taken off and were forced to wear prison uniforms. In fact, for a monk it is the most painful event of life to take off his robes that he has worn to dedicate his life on the path of Buddha. It is true that the junta could take off their robes, but they could not strip of their spiritual monkhood. Despite being forced to wear prison uniforms and being officially stripped of their membership of the Sangha, they

continued to practice their faith and meditation. There were many monks who have been sent to the prison labor camps to be chained and shackled from where the chances of return are very low because of malaria like that of the Devil's Island. For instance, it is the concrete floors where the prisoners have to lie without any beds where the gusty winds pass through. The food that they are given to eat are so bad that a pig would shake his head and refuse to eat when he sees that coming – even though pigs are known to have the habit of eating anything.

Monks are the *Dharma sons* of Buddha. They pass their life beneath the veneer of serenity and religious devotion. They live quietly in monasteries studying *Dhamma*. They keep teaching the tenets of Buddha for the peace of the whole mankind of the world. The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace. It teaches that peace or war is our decision and it is not out of our hands. The Buddha taught that the first step on the path to peace is understanding the causality of peace and to direct the efforts to remove the causes which hinder the peace just like removing a boiling water pot from fire to make it cool. If we do not first address the fundamental issues, all other actions will come to naught.

Burma is a nation of 57.6 million people with a land area of 678,500 sq. km. Around 90 percent of the population are Buddhist and the rest are Muslims, Christians, Hindus or animists. There are 500,000 Buddhist monks, novices and nuns in Burma. Monkhood is the highest moral authority in Burma. In line with the Buddhist philosophy of removal from earthly desire, everything a monk owns or consumes is supposed to be donated by the lay community. Every morning the monks go out to collect alms with bowl – mostly food – from near their monasteries and people struggle to give them enough food to eat in lean times and in return the monks bestow on the donor the "merit" that will eventually help him or her to achieve *nirvana* – or release from the cycle of birth.

However, the monks are supposed to stay out of the temporal affairs such as politics. But when they see people suffering, they come forward to remove the causes which effect the sufferings as per the doctrine of *Karma*. According to the *Vinaya* - Buddhist rules for the monastic community, the only way a monk should get involved in political matters is if the government starts hurting people or suppresses the monkhood. In 1919, there was a violence in Mandalay when the monks tried to expel a group of shoe-wearing British officials from a pagoda and they started a campaign against the British rule which has originated from this event of refusing of the British officials to remove their footwear while entering the temples which was a sign of a grave disrespect to the Buddhist holy sites and the campaign is known as "Shoe Question". Similarly, in 1889, Bo Ottama, a rebel monk who led 3,000 rebels in the Salin area a year after the invasion of Mandalay was captured and hanged by the British in 1889. Another martyr, Saya San, who was an ex-monk, led a peasant uprising in Tharrawaddy opposing the tax system imposed by the British. Burma's colonial masters sent 10,000 troops to quell the rebellion, capturing Saya San and sending him, too, to the gallows. One of Burma's independence heroes is U Wisara who was a highly respected senior monk. He was imprisoned several times for his public speech against British colonial rule and died

in jail in 1929 after 166 days of hunger strike. And similarly another independence hero U Ottama was a highly respected monk from Arakan State who spent many years in prison for opposing British colonialism.

In fact, in the history of Independent Burma it is the democratic government of U Nu who has sincerely shown highest respect to the monks and in 1961 U Nu also tried to legalize Buddhism as the state religion of Burma . But soon after the military takeover in 1962, General Ne Win regarded the monks as a potential opposition and schemed a strategy to control them. He subjected many senior monks who refused to cooperate with the regime to derogatory treatment like Mahasi Sayadaw who was Burma's top Buddhist scholar and an internationally respected monk. Of course, Ne Win did not pretend to be a devout Buddhist and unlike the current military generals he was rarely seen in the religious ceremonies and with the monks.

However, crushing the Saffron Revolution, the military regime has drawn themselves in the midst of a fierce struggle involving blood and fire, a life and death struggle with the monastic society of Burma and it will let them understand how deep, how arduous, how complex and how long-term the nature of the struggle is. The military regime has blocked all the avenues of peaceful protests of the common people and finally they have turned to the monastic community to take up the leadership for the cause of restoration of peace and democracy in the country. September will remain forever as a month of paying tribute to the souls of the monks and everyone else murdered openly in the streets or in the darkness of nights. The ideals of courage in the face of military brutalities and their readiness to sacrifice themselves on the altar of peace for the helpless commoners will be remembered by the people of Burma generations after generations with deep respect and also with deep sadness. The glory of the memorial structures which have been constructed in the hearts of the people will never fade. It will continue to shine forever and will inspire them to rise again and again to tear the shackles of tyranny and hoist the flag of peace for the distressed humanity.#



## Genocidal Operations against Rohingyas

**Dated: 2009-02-16 09:45:14**

Branding the ethnic Rohingyas as Bangladeshi immigrants, the Burmese state-run newspaper, *The New Light of Myanmar* carried a story on Jan 30, 2009 saying: 'Bengalis from neighbouring country illegally immigrated Rakhine region of Myanmar...The government had to scrutinize illegal immigrants under national necessity... ....The

government keeps on preventing illegal immigrations. ...With the aim of preventing illegal immigrants from entering the nation, the government launched Operations 'Kyeegan' and 'Shwe Kyee' in Buthidaung and Maungdaw regions in 1966, and Operation 'Myat Mon' in Sittway and Kyaukpyu districts from 1969 to 1971 and took the census of Bengalis.... ..Under the



**Oppressed Rohingyas crossing the Naaf to seek refuge in Bangladesh.**

Operation Nagar Min in 1978, Bengalis illegally living in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Pauktaw, Kyauktaw, Sittway, MraukU and Minbya townships in Rakhine State were scrutinized to find out whether they were nationals or not. The majority of them dared not face the scrutinization, and fled to their native neighbouring countries... ..In the late 1991 and early 1992, the government, under the national necessity, had to scrutinize Bengalis illegally living in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Pauktaw and Sittway townships in Rakhine State to expose whether they were nationals or not. The majority of them left the nation in fear of the scrutinization."

Similarly, in an article published by the junta mouthpiece, *The New Light of Myanmar* on Feb 08, 2009, under the caption 'Rohinja is not Myanmar national race, nor is in Myanmar' it said: 'When the Revolutionary Council assumed the State responsibilities, steps were taken from October to December in 1966 to scrutinize and segregate Muslims who had already become Myanmar citizens from Bengali Muslims who later stealthily entered the nation under operation Kyigan. Under the operation, a large number of Bengali Muslims in Sittway, Myebon, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun, Thandwe, Taungup, Kyeingyaung and Maungdaw regions were found to be those who illegally entered the nation.'

It also said: 'In February 1969, illegal immigrant Bengalis were scrutinized in Sittway and

*Kyaukpheung districts under the Myatmon operation. In 1971 when a conflict between East Pakistan (Bengal) and West Pakistan broke out over 10,000 Bengali refugees fled to Buthidaung and Maungdaw regions. Necessary measures were taken for them to be able to return to their native (Bengal) after systematic scrutiny. Starting from February 1974, illegal immigrants were scrutinized in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin and Shan states under the Sabai operation. Under the operation, it was found that there were 988 Bangladeshi citizens who illegally entered Rakhine State, 663 who breached the citizen registration act and 18,254 foreigners. Every time when operations were launched, the illegal Bengali Muslim immigrants fled to Bangladesh en masse. In 1978 when the Nagamin operation was launched those who illegally entered Rakhine State fled to their native nation. Some of those who fled to the native nation were scrutinized and accepted through the Hinthar operation.'*

About the origin of the Rohingyas, the article said: *'In the time of the British government, it was that the British brought Bengalis and Indians of India (now Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) into the nation with various intentions. ....The British ruled Rakhine State for 123 years from 1827 to 1948. During that period, Bengalis entered the nation en masse.'*

However, this is an arrogant and at the same time a brazen confession, though in a whitewash mode, of the Burmese military regime about the genocidal operations that it had conducted against the innocent Rohingyas in the name of scrutinization of the illegal immigrants under national necessity and also vowing to continue such a practice against the Rohingyas in the name of preventing illegal immigrations in the future.

It may be mentioned here that although the slavish history of the Rohingyas began with the annexation of Arakan in 1784 with Burma by the Burman king Bodaw Phaya, but the story of their large scale persecution and oppression began with the beginning of the 20th century. Particularly, since 1937, when Burma was separated from British India, the soil of Arakan has been frequently drenched with the blood of the Rohingyas which caused innumerable exodus of Rohingyas in the wake of innumerable operations led against the Rohingyas out of which the Pogrom of 1942, Dragon King Operation of 1978 and the Operation of 1991/92 are the most horrific genocidal operations. Being deprived of fundamental human rights and being victim of the systematic genocide, extra-judicial persecution and eviction, the Rohingyas have been leading a gypsy life at home and abroad decades after decades. The reminiscence of the tragic stories of the most heinous Pogrom of 1942 which is notoriously known as *"Biyallishar Khara Khari"* still shudders the hearts of those who had witnessed the tragedy where over 2 hundred thousand Rohingya men, women and children have been massacred. During that Pogrom, the Rohingyas of 22 villages known as *Baishfajja* in Mrohaung Township which was the capital city of Ancient Arakan Kingdom and also the Rohingyas of 14 villages known as *Chaidafajja* of Kyawktaw Township, have been purely massacred without leaving a single Rohingya alive in those villages. During that time, tens of thousands of Rohingyas crossed to neighboring countries. Those who survived the massacre stated that the genocidal operation in "Kyawktaw" Township was so fierce that the water of the *"Kaladen River"* has got a crimson color with the bloods of Rohingya victims. And for the following 2/3 years, the fish of the river could not be eaten due to the decomposed bodies of the victims.

However, particularly since Gen. Ne Win's seize of power in 1962, the exodus of Rohingyas from Arakan has turned out to be a regular phenomenon in order to escape the systematic genocidal, ethnic cleansing and drive out operations led against the Rohingyas by the Burmese military rulers. And as a part of the systematic genocidal operation, Nagar Min Operation which is known as *Dragon King Operation*, was led against the Rohingyas in 1978, when innumerable Rohingya men, women and children have been subjected to massacres and eviction. During this operation, about 3 hundred thousand Rohingyas fled to neighboring Bangladesh. This was, in fact, the first time when the Rohingya refugee problem drew the international attention. Later, however, the Burmese military government was forced by the international community to take back its citizens.

But due to the lack of an all-out guarantee of their security in Arakan, a major portion of the refugees refused to return home and later, many of them have got mixed with the local people of Bangladesh and started leading a gypsy life here and there as undocumented refugees and many of them crossed to different countries like India, Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arabia etc.

However, out of those 3 hundred thousand refugees, only 180,000 have returned home amidst utter despondency and grief. But since there was no international observation team inside Arakan to look after the returning refugees, those who returned have become victims of double persecutions. They were not returned their original hearths and homes. The relief commodities given by different international organizations for these returning refugees were not distributed among them and instead were distributed elsewhere. In a punishing act, many food go-downs of the refugees were burnt down by the army. As a result, one third of the returning refugees died of starvation and malnutrition and the rest of them began to lead a gypsy life here and there inside Arakan. In 1979, the military rulers led two more operations against the Rohingyas which were called "*Galoon*" and "*Shwe Hinsu*".

However, in late 1991, the world witnessed another grim showbiz of crackdown of the Burmese military regime when tens of thousands of Rohingya men, women and children streamed into neighboring Bangladesh with stories of rapes, killings, slave labor and destruction of religious sites and other acts of human rights violations. At that time, the Bangladesh government registered over 255,000 refugees. The green foliage and picturesque valleys of the southern parts of Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh which cater celestial delights to the visitors have turned into a place of exile for those hapless Rohingya refugees.

At that time, the refugees interviewed by different international organizations and the world media reported appalling atrocities at the hands of the Burmese army. Rape of women after their husbands or fathers had been taken for forced labor was common. Sometimes, the rape occurred in the homes of the victims with children and relatives left to watch. Sometimes, the women were taken to a nearby military camp where they were sorted out by beauty. In some cases, the women were killed, in other cases they were allowed to return home fully traumatized.

However, in order to legalize the genocidal operations and the worst human rights violations

against the Rohingyas in a systematic way, the military regime has abrogated the Rohingyas' rights to the Burmese citizenships through an amendment to the Burma's citizenship law in 1982, suddenly making them illegal immigrants in their ancestral motherland where they have been living centuries after centuries and whose presence in the region can be traced back to the 7th century.

In fact, during the long military rule since 1962 the army had conducted armed operations against the Rohingyas almost every year under the aegis of the notorious "Immigration Act". And it is this notorious 'Immigration Act' which serves as a ready instrument to put any Rohingya in prison as and when the authority desires. For example, during 1990 general elections only four Rohingyas were elected members of parliament. Then the authority asked them to resign. Three Rohingya MPs immediately resigned fearing reprisals but one Rohingya MP U Kyaw Min refused to resign. Then he was dragged to prison and handed down 47 years of imprisonment on the allegation of being a foreigner and was charged under Section 18 Citizenship Law 1982 and section 5(j) Anti State Emergency Law. At the same time his wife Daw Tiza, his two daughters Kin Kin Nu and Way Way Nu and his son Maung Aung Naing have also been sentenced to 17 years imprisonment respectively. Now all of them have been passing a nightmarish life in the jail in Burma.

Moreover, as a part of its "divide & rule" policy, the military regime has instigated many communal riots between the Rakhines and Rohingyas. Besides, the army and other law enforcing personnel often enter the Rohingya localities on the pretext of an enquiry. While searching the houses of the Rohingyas, they either assault the Rohingya womenfolk or take away those who look beautiful. The Rohingyas are often compelled to provide rice, goats, fowls, etc., free of cost for the army or the police outposts. In what is called modern-day slave labor, they are forced to provide free labour for the construction of different roads and accommodation facilities for the government forces. Sometimes, while all the males of a Rohingya village are summoned to an army camp under some pretext, including forced volunteering for the slave labor – the "*kooli*" - the forces indiscriminately assault and dishonor the Rohingya women.

Besides, serious restrictions are imposed on the Rohingyas on their marriage. They are not allowed to marry without official permission which takes some two years to obtain from the authority and again no permission is granted without signing a commitment not to have more than two children. Couples caught getting married or sleeping together without this approval can be arrested. And there are innumerable cases where Rohingyas have been jailed for even seven years for not complying with the requirements of the marriage rules which are only applicable to Rohingyas in Burma.

However, the stories of groaning Rohingyas which has started since the beginning of the 20th century are still continuing. They have been bleeding and their tears have been rolling down their cheeks generation after generation. Sometimes they die in silence or perish in the deep sea beyond the notice and sometimes they cry in the corner. Nobody knows when the stories of their bloods and tears will come to an end.#



## Burma Heading Towards the Worst

**Dated: 2008-02-11 10:10:54**

Burma's national icon of democracy, peace and liberty, Daw Aung San Suu Kyie has cautioned the people of Burma to prepare for the worst, during a rare meeting with the members of her party, the National League for Democracy on Jan 30, 2008, after she was allowed a rare respite from house arrest. She criticized the series of meetings she has held with the military junta's Liaison Minister, Aung Kyi for failing to yield any tangible result towards the achievement of any political



reform. So, it is clear that Burma is heading to witness another grim showbiz of blood-bath which may be the worst in the history of Burma, if the military rulers stick to their hard-line stance to grind the hopes of the people of Burma under their despotic wheel and thus to defy the international outcry to restore peace and democracy in Burma.

During the long 46 years of unbroken military rule since 1962, Burma has witnessed many episodes of brutalities and tyranny of the army who have always treated the guns as not for shooting upwards, but to shoot directly at those who raise their voice against the military rule.

On July 7, 1962, the army has indiscriminately massacred more than 100 students of Rangoon University, wounded many others and arrested about 3000 students, simply because they raised their protest against some rules and regulations which were imposed upon them by the regime restricting their usual movement same as those in the military barracks, prohibiting students coming in or going out after 8 pm and signing the register book to ascertain that they were in. Such rules sent students to bed hungry because the dinner provided by the hall was served from 4.30 to 6.30 pm and supper was not provided by the hall and the students had to manage it according to their convenience. However, in the morning of the 7th July 1962, the

campus was surrounded by about 2000 soldiers. At first an exchange of abuses took place between the students and the soldiers. The soldiers were just waiting for the order to shoot. At dusk the order was given and the shooting began in no time which lasted about half an hour. The death toll of the students was 135 according to the students' source and 34 according to the government announcement. After the shooting, the campus was cleared up, the dead and the wounded were carried away and at midnight the historic "Students Union Building" was dynamited and bulldozed. Everything was done swiftly and precisely. Next morning everything was normal and quiet. (Details in " **Burma: Nationalism and Ideology**", by Dr Shwe Lu Maung).

Similar grim showbiz was perpetrated by the military regime on 11 December 1974 , where hundreds of university students were brutally killed by the army following the tug-of-war over the siege of the body of U Thant, the Ex-Secretary General of the UN. U Thant was and still is regarded by the people of Burma as a most serene and brightest son of Burma. However, the students were massacred because they wanted to put the body of U Thant to final rest in an honorable site which would stand for the people of Burma as the milestone of glory and pride. But Gen. Ne Win wanted to bury the body in a common cemetery of "Kyandaw" where the body of notorious Khine May Than (Ne Win's first legal wife) was buried.

Thus, there arose a tense situation centering the siege of the body. At this critical situation, once the students seizing the body buried it in the ground of the Students Union Building of Rangoon University on 10th December 1974. But next morning at about 5 am, the army entered the campus using tanks. The Chancellor Gate was first bulldozed off. The army began arresting everybody on the way and herded them off in the military trucks. When the soldiers started digging for the body, students began to march onward to stop them. Then began indiscriminate shooting! When the body was raised, there was a tug-of-war over the body.

All those students who rushed onwards to snatch the body of U Thant, were shot dead. A popular high school girl student, Khin Khin Myint (?), was one of those who clung on to the coffin of U Thant. First the soldiers began to kick her down to depart her from the coffin, later seeing that she was not leaving the coffin off, the soldiers shot her down. Thus, the UN flag with which the body of U Thant was wrapped, was drenched with the blood of the students.

During the great Pro-Democracy Uprising of 1988 which is known as "8888 Uprising" and is regarded as a national revolution in Burma, over 3,000 democracy-seeking civilians including students, monks, government employees, workers, farmers, traders and even housewives, were brutally killed and thousands of others have been either maimed or imprisoned without any trial.

During the recent anti-military protest known as "Saffron Revolution", the world has awfully witnessed how brutally the army can quash the peaceful demonstrations led by the revered

Monks. It was the biggest anti-junta protests for nearly 20 years. During this anti-military protests tens of thousands of the people took to the streets with the monks leading the demonstrations, wearing deep maroon robes, where over one hundred peaceful demonstrators including monks, students and the public were killed and thousands of others were arrested.

There is no denying the fact that the words of frustration of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi came out due to the lack of any progress at the current pace of her talks with the military junta's Liaison Minister for political reforms in Burma, because the military regime has no interest to listen to what the people of Burma want or to what the international community says.

However, It is no more difficult to understand that Professor Ibrahim Gambari who has been appointed by the UN Chief as an special envoy to Burma to assist "in the process of national reconciliation through dialogue", has already been bracketed by the military rulers and there is no more way for him to play an effective role in the process of democratization of Burma.

It is nothing unusual that the army who have enjoyed the taste of absolute power in celestial delight for nearly half a century, can not give it up so easily. They will stick to their position at any cost, no matter for them what amount of bloods are spilled on the streets of Burma or what amount of tears are rolling down the cheeks of the groaning people of Burma. But the point which seriously frustrates the international peace loving community is that the Security Council of the UN, which is believed to be the custodian of the world peace, has failed to adopt an unanimous resolution to compel the junta to bow their head to the international pressure, due to stiff resistance from veto-wielding council members China and Russia, except showing some face-saving episodes.

Nevertheless, the people of Burma have demonstrated many times in the past that they have the courage to stare at the eye of death and to move onward under the shower of bullets and the flash of machine guns, no matter whether they are bruised or bleeding or racked with thirst. They did not wait to see whether the UNSC can move or whether the ASEAN can give up their soft stance on Burma in line with its general policy of non-interference in domestic affairs (?) of Burma.

The people of Burma have never given up their struggle of defying the military rulers in whatever means they could avail. They have been resorting to hit-and-run protests in different parts of the country including Rangoon. They are posting posters calling for the release of all political prisoners, Buddhist monks and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They are raising their voice through all available means against the despotic regime, be that music or short story or internet or any other literary works. Now, it is clear that the people of Burma will not wait to see whether Mr. Gambari can bring any tangible result or whether his travel to a number of countries including Burma's neighboring country like India can make any difference. They also will not wait to see whether there will be any progress in the efforts of Mr. Peiro Fassino, the European Special Envoy for Burma, who has been continuously taking initiatives and seeking cooperation from China, India, ASEAN countries and Japan.

Now, it is time for the international community to see what notch of the worst episodes is going to be added in the scale of brutalities of the Burmese military rulers.#

## The Curse of Historical Rivalries in Arakan State of Burma

**Dated: 2009-04-16 09:09:21**

For 3.5 million Rohingya Muslims of Arakan State of Burma, history has turned out to be an instrument to subject them to the worst human rights violations like denial of citizenship, a ban on marriage without government permission, severe restrictions of movement, religious persecution, extortion, land confiscation and restrictions on access to education etc. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which works in northern Arakan State and has also operated in the camps for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, has described the Rohingya as one of the ten world populations in danger of extinction.



However, turning the wheels of Rohingyas' history backward and distorting the records of Rohingyas' glorious past in the multicultural society of Arakan which is traced back to the 7th century, the Burmese military regime and the majority of Rakhines of Arakan State brand the Rohingyas as the 'Bengali immigrants' alleging that *'In the time of the British government, it was that the British brought Bengalis and Indians of India (now Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) into the nation with various intentions. ....The British ruled Rakine State (Arakan) for 123 years from 1827 to 1948. During that period, Bengalis entered the nation en masse.'* Ref: *The New Light of Myanmar*, a state-run news paper of the Burmese military regime, dated Jan 30, 2009.

The anti-Rohingya camps brand the Rohingyas as Bengali immigrants because of their close affinity with the neighbouring people of Chittagong of Bangladesh linguistically, religiously, culturally and physically. Notably, Rohingyas share Indo-Aryan physical features of dark and pale skin like the people of Bangladesh and India because of being the descendants of the people of the Indo-Aryan stock.

However, the focal point of the historical rivalries is whether the Rohingyas existed in ancient Arakan Kingdom before its annexation with the British colonial rule in 1827. Even though there is a tug-of-war between the Rohingyas and anti-Rohingya camps over many issues of the history of ancient Arakan, but at least there are few issues where there is an unequivocal consensus among the Rohingyas, the anti-Rohingya camps and the world historians. They unanimously agree that the names of many kings of the ancient Arakan before the British colonial rule, were 'Muslim' like (1) Solaiman Shah Naramaikhla (1430-1434), (2) Ali Khan Meng Khari (1434-1459), (3) Kalima Shah Ba Saw Phyu (1459-1482), (4) Mathu Shah Doulya (1482-1492), (5) Mohammed Shah Ba Saw Nyo (1492-1493), (6) Nori Shah Ran Aung (1493-1494), (7) Sheikh Modullah Shah Salingathu (1494-1501), (8) Ili Shah Meng Raza (1501-1523), (9) Ilias Shah Kasabadi (1523-1525), (10) Jalal Shah Meng Saw Oo (1525), (11) Ali Shah Thatasa (1525-1531), (12) Salimshah (1608). All the historians including the anti-Rohingya camps also unanimously agree that all those kings used coins with Muslim inscriptions like *Kalima 'la-ilaha-illallah', 'Muhammedur Rasulullah'*.

This is irrefutable evidence that the Muslims existed in Arakan either as a ruler or as a predominant factor in ruling the ancient Arakan Kingdom. This is also an irrefutable evidence of the peaceful coexistence of all the people of Arakan irrespective of caste, creed or colour who have concentrated to defend the peace and prosperity of their motherland Arakan. So, it is quite illogical to raise a controversy as to whether those kings of Arakan were Muslims or simply used Muslim names and titles and coins under a tremendous Muslim influence.

Now, the question of 'Rohingya' name. The anti-Rohingya camps allege that the word 'Rohingya' has sprang up by 1950s and it was never heard before. But for one's easy reference, here is a simple record of 1799th publication: '*A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire*' which was published by Francis Buchanan in 1799, in the fifth volume of Asiatic Researches. This piece provides one of the first major Western surveys of the languages of Burma. But the article goes beyond this and provides important data on the ethno-cultural identities and identifications of the various population groups of the ancient Arakan in terms of topography, history, antiquities, the condition of the inhabitants, religion, natural productions (particularly fisheries, forests, mines, and quarries), agriculture (covering vegetables, implements, manure, floods, domestic animals, fences, farms, and landed property, fine and common arts, and commerce (exports and imports, weights and measures, and conveyance of goods). Ref: SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, Vol. 1, No., 1, Spring 2003, ISSN 1479-8484 Ref: <http://web.soas.ac.uk/burma/%20Comparative%20Vocabulary.PDF>

Dr Francis Buchanan, later known as Francis Hamilton or Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (15 February 1762 - 15 June 1892) was a Scottish physician who made significant contributions as a geographer, zoologist and botanist while living in India. From 1803 to 1804 he was surgeon to the Governor General of India Lord Wellesley in Calcutta.

However, in his article, Dr Francis Buchanan wrote:

'I shall now add three dialects, spoken in the Burma Empire, but evidently derived from the language of the *Hindu* nation. The first is that spoken by the *Mohammedans*, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves *Rooinga*, or natives of Arakan. The second dialect is that spoken by the *Hindus* of Arakan. I procured it from a *Brahmen* and his attendants, who had been brought to *Amarapura* by the king's eldest son, on his return from the conquest of *Arakan*. They call themselves *Rossawn*, and, for what reason I do not know, wanted to persuade me that theirs was the common language of Arakan. Both these tribes, by the real natives of *Arakan*, are called *Kulaw Yakain*, or stranger *Arakan*.

The last dialect of the *Hindustanee*, which I shall mention, is that of a people called, by the Burmas, *Aykobat*, many of them are slaves at *Amarapura*. By one of them I was informed, that they had called themselves *Banga*; that formerly they had kings of their own; but that, in his father's time, their kingdom had been overturned by the king of *Munnypura*, who carried away a great part of the inhabitants to his residence. When that was taken last by the Burmas, which was about fifteen years ago, this man was one of the many captives who were brought to *Ava*.

He said also, that *Banga* was seven days' journey south-west from *Munnypura*: it must, therefore, be on the frontiers of *Bengal*, and may, perhaps, be the country called in our maps *Cashar*.'

Giving a record of the 'Rooinga' vocabulary, Dr Francis Buchanan mentioned 50 words spoken by the 'Rooinga' tribe by that time like: ( 1) *Bel* - Sun (2) *Sawn* - Moon (3) *Tara* - Stars (4) *Kool* - Earth (5) *Pannæ* - Water (6) *Auin* - Fire (7) *Sheel* - Stone (8) *Bau* - Wind (9) *Jorail* - Rain (10) *Manush* - Man (11) *Meealaw* - Woman (12) *Gourapa* - Child (13) *Mata* - Head (14) *Gall* -Mouth (15) *Bahara* - Arm (16) *Hat* - Hand (17) *Ban* - Leg (18) *Pau* - Foot (19) *Zoomtroo* - Beast (20) *Paik* - Bird (21) *Maws* - Fish (22) *Goom* - Good (23) *Goom nay* - Bad (24) *Boddau* - Great (25) *Thuddee* - Little (26) *Botdean* - Long (27) *Banick* - Short (28) *Awg\** - One (29) *Doo* - Two (30) *Teen* - Three (31) *Tchair* - Four (32) *Pansoe* - Five (33) *Saw* - Six (34) *Sat* - Seven (35) *Awtoa* - Eight (36) *Nonaw* - Nine (37) *Dussoa* - Ten (38) *Kau* - Eat (39) *Karin* - Drink (40) *Layrow* - Sleep (41) *Pawkay Bayra* - Walk (42) *Boihow* - Sit (43) *Tcheilayto* - Stand (44) *Marim* - Kill (45) *Hoi* - Yes (46) *Etibar* - No (47) *Hayray* - Here (48) *Horay* - There (49) *Ouchalo* - Above (50) *Ayray* - Below.

Notably, except four words e.g.; *Ban*, *Thuddee*, *Tcheilayto* and *Etibar* out of these 50 *Rooinga* words, all other 46 words are still commonly spoken by the Rohingyas of today's Arakan and the people of Chittagong alike some ones with a little change of accent, object and area. So, this is irrefutable evidence that the word '*Rohingya*' has originated from '*Rooinga*', the name of a tribe of the Muslims of the ancient Arakan. It did not spring up like a mushroom in 1950s.

There is no denying the fact that the ancient Arakan was a multicultural society which was inhabited by many communities like the Rakhines, Rohingyas, Chakmas, Hindus, Christians, Mros, Khumis, Kamens and some hill tribes. In the words of Dr Shwe Lu Maung:

"The Rakhaing King was the patron of all religions and culture. Siddikh Khan Mosque was built by the Rakhaing King in 1430 AD. It is the first Mosque in all Burma. I suggest that UNESCO may please take due action to restore this oldest Myanmar Muslim heritage. .... (1) The Rohingya issue is a cultural and political issue. (2) The politicians recognize the Rohingyas. I am a disciple of Bogri Kra Hla Aung and Chairman Kyaw Zan Rhee. I worked with them in 1966-67. We have about fifty Muslim comrades with us in Bogri's party. Both leaders told me that we have to give due rights and recognition to the Muslim Nationals. As their disciple I recognize and respect the Rohingyas. (3) Presidents U Shwe Tha, U Maung Sein Nyunt, U Padi Phru, U Kyaw Hlaing, Dr. Khin Maung, Bo-Mhu Htun Kyaw Oo, Red Comrade Oo Khin Maung, Khaing Ahnar Ni are the politicians and they all recognize the Rohingyas. I also met General Khaing Raza with Dr. Yunus at Dhaka in 1991. I would assume that General Khaing Raza also recognizes the Rohingyas. Same conclusion applies to Commander Saw Tun who was killed along with General Raza."

History is a mirror which reflects the past of a nation and in many cases it guides a nation to the road of peace and prosperity. In order to achieve peace and prosperity, it is immensely necessary to take care of only the positive and constructive events of the history and to bury the dirty ones.

Rivalries will beget rivalries and it will never solve the problem. This will simply poison the life of the people of Arakan not only for today but also for the future generations. So, in order to let peace prevail in Arakan and to restore communal harmony between two warring communities - the Rakhines and Rohingyas, it is extremely important to bury the course of historical rivalries and to initiate a politics of peace to create a society for all the people of Arakan which would be free from political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural slavery.#



## The Failure of the Gambari Mission in Burma

**Dated: 2008-04-14 08:13:44**

Turning a deaf ear to international outcries, Burma's military rulers are going to perpetuate military domination in running the state forever through unilaterally holding a referendum on May 10.2008 on a pro-military constitution which will not be possible to amend without the consent of the military representatives in the parliament, while the UN especial envoy Ibrahim Gambari who was appointed on a mission to restore peace, democracy and human rights in Burma through a meaningful participation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic and ethnic minority leaders in the process of drafting a national constitution, has virtually reached to a position where the people of Burma can not see any ray of hope from his mission.



Notably, in the draft constitution the constitutional power has been given to the commander in chief to run the country, instead of vesting it in the people under the basic tenets of a democratic system. The commander in chief has been given the power to appoint 25 percent of the seats in both the upper and lower houses of parliament with hand picked military officials who will not be accountable to the people, but fully loyal to the commander in chief.

It also stipulates that no amendments to the charter can be made without the consent of more than 75 percent of lawmakers, making changes impossible without the support of the military representatives in Parliament who occupy 110 seats out of the 440-seat lower house which is called *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives), and 56 seats out of the 224-seat upper house which is called *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities). Moreover, in the event of a "state of emergency" which the *tatmadaw* (armed forces) is given the authority to declare at any time, the commander in chief would assume full legislative, executive and judicial powers.

However, after returning from his third visit to Burma on March 6-10.2008, Ibrahim Gambari has briefed on Burma with the 15-member UN Security Council (UNSC) on March

18.2008 where he admitted his efforts had yielded "no immediate tangible outcome." But he could not ask the Council to do something effective or to strengthen the mandate of the Secretary General in pressuring the military regime for an all party-inclusive national reconciliation process in Burma. Of course, he said that he had reason to believe that the Burmese government attaches importance to his mission and "continues to value the Secretary-General's good offices as the best prospect for further cooperation through mutual trust and confidence, and constructive suggestions." But the people of Burma can not find grounds for such optimism of the UN envoy.

Most unfortunately, Gambari failed even to persuade the Security Council members to release a Presidential Statement after his briefing. The draft Security Council presidential statement which was prepared by three Security Council members—the United States, Britain and France on the Burmese constitutional referendum reflecting the views of the people of Burma, was opposed by the Russian ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin. The draft UN statement called on the military regime to allow full participation of all political actors, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the referendum process in order for it "to be inclusive and credible" through the guarantee of freedom of expression, association and assembly in the political process leading to the referendum as well as independent monitoring of the referendum.

Opposing the draft statement the Russian ambassador said, "Responding off the top of my head, I said to the members of the Council that the way I heard this idea, to me it is somewhat improper for the Security Council to go into describing modalities for a referendum or an election because we are not an election board." He also said, "We are the Security Council; we are dealing with issues of threats to international peace and security." Sadly, the lack of peace of 57.6 million people of Burma who have been groaning under the military for the last 46 years and now going to be enslaved generation after generation through the sham referendum, is not a matter to deal by the UN Security Council as the Russian ambassador wanted to mean.

However, despite being purely rebuffed by the Burmese regime during his last visit which was widely reported by the official media and which made it clear to Gambari that his approach of accommodating the generals in an effort to engage them in a dialogue has not worked, the UN envoy failed to give a frank assessment of the current situation in Burma to the UN Security Council as well as the international community. All his proposals to the regime to amend the draft constitution, to allow a UN role in the May referendum and to include input from the country's pro-democracy movement and other political parties, were rejected outright by the junta. He failed to make minimum visible progress towards achieving the goals set by the UN Security Council through its presidential statement in October 2007.

Mr. Gambari is a veteran diplomat who holds the record of being the longest serving Ambassador / Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN and who served as President of the Security Council on two occasions and chaired the UN Special Committee Against

Apartheid which has successfully seen the demise of the long-standing social injustice and the establishment of democratic rule in South Africa. He also chaired the UN Special Committee on Peace Keeping Operations from 1990-1999. But despite his several rounds of discussions with the junta leaders during his three times visit to Burma and also his countless trips to the capitals around the world over the past few months, he has been unable to accomplish any of the goals set by himself, by the UN Secretary-General, or by the Security Council towards a meaningful national reconciliation in Burma, even though there are reasons to consider broader factors for his ineffectiveness.

In fact, time is running out as the farcical referendum which is aimed at trampling the people of Burma for generations under the military boot, is going to take place on May 10 on the junta-drafted constitution. And in an effort to show some level of "eye-wash success", the local authorities have already started ordering the people to support the constitutional referendum, with threats on those who may say "No" to the draft. People of pro-military organs like Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC), Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and National Unity Party (NUP) are holding meetings at the village level, making known to the people of the consequences of voting "No" in the referendum. They are explaining to the villagers how to vote in the referendum and how the local authorities will observe the people -saying that the local authorities will check the ballots after the polling station is closed and if they find out who is against the draft constitution they will detain him / her to be interrogated immediately why he / she is opposing it. Now, many people have started to think that at least for the sake of one's own safety, it will not be wise to vote "No" in the referendum as it will be like inviting the wolf by a lamb to attack him.

The pro-military people are also cautioning that the situation will be disastrous in the States or Townships where the ethnic minorities live. If the authority finds poor turnout or no-vote majority, the minorities who are purely defenseless and powerless, will have to be ready to face the worst. At the same time, in order to spread panic among the common people, the pro-military gangs are attacking the pro-democracy and human rights activists as the authorities tighten control on opposition groups ahead of the referendum.

There is no denying the fact that the Burmese military rulers are pushing the country to a dangerous road for the future. They are also trying to deceive the international community through the referendum in order to divert international attention away from last September's brutal crackdown.

Now it is time for Gambari to frankly concede that he was unable to get things moving in his approach of "dialogue and accommodation" in Burma, so that the international community can re-evaluate its approach to Burma's ruling generals and also the UN can review its Burma policy.

It is also the expectation of the international community from Ibrahim Gambari to clearly outline what his mission or the international community can do to ensure that the junta addresses the demands of the international community.

Nevertheless, in the wake of the failure and frustration of Ibrahim Gambari, now it is important to strengthen the direct involvement of the UN Secretary General through a separate mandate of the UN Security Council in order to help maximise the international efforts to resolve the political impasse in Burma.#

## SOS from Starving Rohingyas in Bangladesh-Burma border

**Dated: 2008-11-01 09:25:41**

On June 9th, 2008, a vernacular daily of Bangladesh *Dainik Purbokone* ran a report saying that 18 Rohingya children died of hunger and lack of medical treatment in previous two days (June 7th and 8th) in Ukhiya Koto-Palong area of Cox's Bazar, the southern district of Bangladesh. The report also said that about 10,000 Rohingya families with about 100,000 members gathered at east-south Koto-Palong Rohingya refugee camps and in areas adjacent to Ukhiya TV relay center and they are living under open sky.



They are passing their days without shelter, adequate food and medical treatment. The Rohingyas particularly their children are suffering from various diseases causing death almost every day due to the lack of medical treatment and adequate food. The report also said that the Bangladesh Government is not taking care of their plight.

The report said, some Rohingyas namely Rabi Alam, Abul Hashem, Mohd Yousuf, Nurul Islam, Haji Abdul Jalil, Shukkur, Abul Kalam, Rahim Ullah, Abul Fayaz and Sayed Kasim informed the reporters that the newly gathered Rohingyas are living there dividing themselves into four blocks - 200 families in Block-A, 3300 families in Block-B, 2,902 families in Block-C and 3,380 families in Block-D with a total 9,582 families consisting of about 100,000 members. The figure is increasing day by day due to the desperate situation in Burma.

On September 5th, 2008, the Kaladen Press Network ran a report saying that twenty nine unregistered Rohingya refugees died in the Leda camp in Teknaf Upazilla under Cox's Bazar district due to the lack of proper treatment in two previous months (July and August 2008). There were 11 women and 18 men among the dead.

The dead were identified as Eman Hussain (40), son of Md. Sadek , Block B, Rom No. 273, Zahid Hussain( 4 months), son of Kasim Ali, Block D, Room No. 132, Zabernissa (50), daughter of Nabi Hussain, Block B, Room No. 234, Kala Meah (60), son of Ezar Meah, Block A, Room No.133, Md Salam (22), son of Md. Jalal, Block B, Room No.255, Fatema Khatoon (one month), daughter of Sultan, Block B, Room No.136, Eman Hussain (2), son of Md Hussain, Block B, Johar Ansar Rana (3 months), son of Abu Taher, Block B, Room No. 132, Johar Ahmed (70), son of Hussain Ali, B block, Bodozzaman (65), son of Abu Bakker, Block B, Room No. 173, Md. Hussain (77), son of Ulla Meah, Block B, Room No.77, Abdul Salam (50), son of Abdul Zabber, Block C, Room No.193, Noor Kamal, son of Hafez Ahmed, Block F, Room No. 176, Rasheda Begum(35), daughter of Amir Hamza, Block E, Room No. 98, Md. Sayed (25), son of Nurul Alam, Block F, Room No 28, Salima Khatoon (23), wife of Hafez Ahmed, Block F, Room No. 176, Anzuma (3), daughter of Zamal Hussain, Block E, Room No. 93, Fatema (2), daughter of Habi Ullah, Block A, Room No.283, Mabiya Khatoon (60), daughter of Jalal Ahmed, Block C, Room No.2, Noor Jahan (one month), daughter of Md Sultan, Block B, Room No.136, Mazeda (3), daughter of Md. Amin, Block C, Room No.22, Abdur Rahman(70), son of Nazir Hussain, Block C, Room No. 206, Nur Begum (90), daughter of Waziduddin, Block E, Room No.35, Zahida Begum(30), daughter of Lukman Hakim, Block C, Room No.123, Md. Ayub(one day), son of Rashid Ahmed, Block F, Room No. 303, Md. Shoffi(70), son of Sayed Alam, Block E, Room No.167, Zakir Hussain (70), son of Md. Hussain, Block E, Room No.35 and Noor Bosher (3), son of Jamal Hussain, Block F, Room No. 264.

The report also said that starvation was the main cause of the deaths of these destitute Rohingyas because they did not get any support from any quarter. Besides, many of these refugees died of pneumonia, malaria, fever, edema and asthma. When the patients were taken to the clinic of the nearby Islamic Relief (IR), they were given some Paracetamol and some anti-biotic capsules. They could not afford treatment elsewhere.

The plight of Rohingyas is one of the most under-reported humanitarian crises of the world. The world knows that Burma is a country which the military rulers have turned into a secret state of terror during the last 46 years of unbroken military rule. But it is seldom known to the world that Arakan, a State under the Union of Burma, which is the ancestral home of Rohingyas, has been turned into a concentration camp for the Rohingyas by the military regime. Rohingyas are the only one ethnic community of Burma who has no right to citizenship of Burma and thus they have been deprived of the accompanying rights which other people of Burma can enjoy as its citizens.

Rohingyas are regarded in Burma as temporary residents. In Burma there are 135 ethnic communities besides the Rohingyas and even though they are all severely persecuted by the military regime, yet they are recognized as the citizens of Burma. But through an amendment to the country's citizenship law in 1982, the Rohingyas have been singled out by the military regime to be the foreigner in their own land where they have been living since the 7th century, because the Rohingyas are still majority in Western Arakan and they are culturally and linguistically closely related to the people of Greater Chittagong of Bangladesh which

has a border of 208 km with Arakan which is the most naturally resource-rich states of Burma.

The Burmese military regime has left nothing undone to eliminate the Rohingyas from Arakan. Since the takeover of General Ne Win in 1962, genocidal operations have been conducted against them again and again where tens of thousands of Rohingyas were forced to seek refuge in neighboring Bangladesh. And in order to make life unbearable for the Rohingyas in Arakan, the military regime does not allow them to move from one village to another without permission which is obligatory to obtain from three authorities and it takes several days to complete the formalities. Severe restrictions have been imposed in the marriages of Rohingyas and in their daily life in order to make it difficult for them to keep their livelihood running.

Rohingyas know that Bangladesh is a small country with an overwhelming population where it would be extremely difficult for them to survive without having a roof to live under and a source of income for their livelihood. They also know how hunger and diseases have been taking away the life of the Rohingyas who took shelter in different parts of Bangladesh-Burma border. But still they are fleeing their home. They are crossing to neighboring Bangladesh risking an uncertain future of life and death.

On August 26, 2008, the CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide) released a special report after their fact-finding visit to the Bangladesh-Burma border from 27-31 August 2008, where they have highlighted the dire condition of the Rohingyas living in Bangladesh-Burma border as unregistered refugees.

In its executive summary titled "*A people at the brink of extermination*", the CSW said, "Among the most persecuted and oppressed people groups in Burma are the Rohingya, a Muslim people residing primarily in northern Arakan State, western Burma, along the border with Bangladesh."

"Thousands of Rohingyas have fled across the border to Bangladesh, where they find some security but little future. Only 27,258 refugees have been officially recognized by the UNHCR and live in two refugee camps. Thousands more live in dire conditions in temporary unregistered camps and settlements. Access to education and health care is extremely limited, and living conditions are very poor, especially in the rainy season." said the report.

In his recent article titled "*Burma's Muslim Rohingya Minority Dwell at the 'Brink of Extermination'*", Benedict Rogers, the Deputy Chairman of the UK Conservative Party's Human Rights Commission and the Advocacy Officer of the CSW for South Asia, said, "A senior UN official, who has served in Darfur and other humanitarian crisis situations and who, in the words of a foreign diplomat, 'knows human misery when he sees it', recently described the situation in northern Arakan as 'as bad as anything he has seen in terms of the

*denial of basic human freedoms". Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which works in northern Arakan State and has also operated in the camps for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, has described the Rohingya as one of the ten world populations in danger of extinction."*

Mr. Benedict Rogers also writes, *"If Burma as a whole is under-reported, the people on its western borders are almost unknown to the world. Journalists, activists and aid agencies who visit the region tend to head for the Thailand-Burma border, where access to refugees, displaced people and democracy groups is greatest. Few visit Burma's borders with India, where a famine is unfolding, or with China, where women are trafficked into prostitution, and fewer still make it to the Bangladesh border where a slow, forgotten genocide is taking place."*

Bangladesh is not a party to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951, and its Protocol of 1967. It also does not have any national legislation to deal with asylum or refugee issues. During 1978 and 1991-92, the Rohingya asylum seekers were granted refugee status by the Bangladesh Government under 'executive orders' on a group basis (*prima facie refugee status*). Now, these undocumented Rohingya refugees do not get any support from any national or international organization because the Bangladesh government does not recognize them as refugees in order to evade any responsibility of the refugees in the country.

But in order to save the life of so many destitute human beings, immediate steps must be taken by the Bangladesh government on emergency basis to declare them as refugees in order to pave the way for the UNHCR and other international bodies to provide humanitarian assistance to these status-less Rohingyas. #



## **Min Ko Naing: A Voice of Defiance and a Voice of Hope**

**Dated: 2008-10-06 09:25:18**

Staring at the eye of the presiding judge in the courtroom at Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison on September 09, 2008, a towering figure of Burma's pro-democracy movement, Min Ko Naing addressed in a thunder voice, "You can sentence us to a thousand years in prison for our political activities, but we will continue to defend ourselves in accordance with the law. Nobody can hide from justice." Min Ko Naing made this defiant statement when he and 34 other detained former student leaders of the 88 Generation Students' group appeared in the Rangoon East District Court, located in Insein Prison.

Their lawyer, Nyi Nyi Hlaing said that they were facing a variety of charges related to their involvement in last year's protests. In fact, this protest of the former leaders of the 88 Generation Students' group in last year's August has ultimately turned into the largest anti-regime demonstrations in twenty years since 1988 and became known as the Saffron Revolution drawing tens of thousands of monks and the common people to the streets of Rangoon and all other major cities of the country demanding the end of the despotic military rule which has turned the country into a pauper state and forced millions of the people to live a miserable life with half-naked body full of hunger and grief.



Min Ko Naing and his colleagues were charged of violations of Electronics Act 33A, the Illegal Organizations Act 17/1 and Section 4 of SPDC Law No 5/96, which prohibits actions that "endanger the national convention". For instance, it is the guidelines of the stage-managed farcical National Convention where only the military hand-picked delegates have attended and which has paved the way for the 54-member Constitution Drafting Commission to draft a pro-military constitution on which the military regime staged a referendum drama in the country on last May 2008 and is going to be followed by the general elections in 2010. This sham constitution contains all the provisions to glorify the militarism in the governance where the head of the army will be the most powerful person in the country, with the ability

to appoint key cabinet figures and suspend the constitution in the event of an emergency that he defines. It also stipulates that no amendments to the charter can be made without the consent of more than 75 percent of lawmakers, making changes impossible without the support of the military representatives in Parliament who occupy 110 seats out of the 440-seat lower house which is called *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives), and 56 seats out of the 224-seat upper house which is called *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities). Moreover, in the event of a "state of emergency" which the *tatmadaw* (armed forces) is given the authority to declare at any time, the commander in chief would assume full legislative, executive and judicial powers.

They were also charged with violating Article 130B of the Penal Code, which prohibits libel against friendly foreign powers, which stemmed from their alleged criticism of China and Russia for their role in vetoing a draft UN Security Council resolution on Burma in January 2007. They were also accused of speaking with the exiled media and the recorded interviews and other items uploaded to Web sites operated by Burmese exiles were produced as evidence.

On August 27, 2008, the authority was formally requested to permit Min Ko Naing and his colleagues to appear in the court without handcuffs, but they were brought to the courtroom in handcuffs. Many of these veterans of Burma's pro-democracy movement have spent more than a decade in prison for their political activities. Besides Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, other prominent members of the 88 Generation Students' Group who are now in detention, include Htay Win Aung, Min Zeya, Mya Aye and Kyaw Min Yu - also known as Ko Jimmy.

The original name of Min Ko Naing is Paw U Tun . He was born on 18 October 1962 in Rangoon. He is the third son of U Thet Nyunt and Daw Hla Kyi. His parent are Mon-Chinese race from Mudon in Mon State . He has three sisters. They are Daw Kyi Kyi Nyunt, Daw Ye Ye Nyunt, Daw Thadar Nyunt. His family lives in No(151/Ka), Waizayantar Road , (16/2) Ward, Thingangyun Township , Rangoon.

Min Ko Naing literally means "*conqueror of kings*" which was adopted as a pseudonym by Paw U Tun and by at least 18 other students in 1988 to sign posters and leaflets criticizing the military rule. While a student at the University of Rangoon in the 1980s, Min Ko Naing secretly organized a nationwide student union to oppose decades of military rule. In March 1988, demonstrations began in Rangoon, the then capital of Burma to protest the government mismanagement of the country's economy which turned the resource-rich Burma into the world's poorest country and was accorded Least Developed Nation status by the UN that year in the wake of the demonetization of much of the Burmese currency in 1987 by the military government of General Ne Win. This has eventually led to an unprecedented civil unrest. And Min Ko Naing soon emerged as a leader, encouraging people to use peaceful means to express their frustration. At the height of the mass civil disobedience campaign against 26 years of one-party military rule in Burma, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) was formed on 28 August 1988 and Min Ko Naing was made the chairman

of the ABFSU. At the founding rally of the ABFSU, Min Ko Naing called on students throughout the country to struggle peacefully against military rule and for democracy and freedom of association.

After violently suppressing the pro-democracy demonstrations and gunning down about 10,000 people in August 1988, the military seized power again in September 1988 and formed a new government, called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Martial law decrees were issued, including a ban on any criticism of the military and of any public gathering of more than five people. They arrested hundreds of students for their political opposition activities. Although thousands of young activists fled to neighboring countries, others continued their struggle inside the country. In March 1989, the SLORC began to issue warnings against possible memorial gatherings by students and others to mark the first anniversaries of the deaths of student demonstrators during the initial waves of civil unrest in March 1988.

On 24 March 1989, Min Ko Naing was arrested and was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment under Section 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, vaguely-worded legislation which is frequently used to imprison political prisoners. Later, his 20 years' imprisonment was commuted to 10 years under a general amnesty.

During the early stages of his detention, Min Ko Naing was severely tortured and ill-treated and his health suffered as a consequence. During his interrogation he was reportedly forced to stand in water for two weeks until he collapsed, and as a result, his left foot became totally numb.

For most of his imprisonment Min Ko Naing has been held in complete solitary confinement. In November 1994 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma was also allowed to visit him briefly in prison, and described him as being nervous and thin. Subsequent reports on his health stated that, although it improved, he suffers from a nervous tremor and may have suffered emotionally as a result of his ill-treatment and prolonged solitary confinement. He is believed to suffer from a gastric ulcer. On April 22, 2008, a statement of the US State Department said, military-ruled Burma's imprisoned pro-democracy activist Min Ko Naing may go blind after failing to receive medical treatment.

It is worth mentioning that political prisoners in Burma routinely face torture during the initial phases of detention when they are often interrogated for hours or even days at a time by rotating teams of Military Intelligence (MI) personnel. During the interrogation, the members of the security forces continue to use torture as a means of extracting information; to punish political prisoners and members of ethnic minorities; and as a means of instilling fear in anyone critical of the military government. Even after sentencing, the political prisoners are vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment, when they can be punished for breaking arbitrary prison rules such as possessing writing paper. In addition, conditions in most prisons are harsh, due to the lack of adequate food, water, sanitation and medical care.

After 15 years in prison, Min Ko Naing was released on 19 November 2004, but was rearrested in late September 2006 after almost two years of his release along with other leading student leaders like Ko Ko Gyi, who was freed from prison in 2005, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho. On January 11, 2007, he was released again. And for the last time, he was arrested again at midnight on 21 August 2007, with other 13 leaders of the 88 Generation Students for organizing the Saffron Revolution.

Min Ko Naing is one of the few top opposition leaders after democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The military regime repeatedly tried to break his spirit. In 1994, the then-U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson visited Min Ko Naing in prison and informed him the regime would permit him to be deported to the United States in exchange for his release, but he refused. For his extraordinary efforts and courage, he won many international awards such as the Civil Courage Prize 2005, the Homo Homini Award by People in Need Foundation, the Student Peace Prize in 2001 and the John Humphrey Freedom Award in Canada on 10 December 1999 and on this occasion, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made comments about him in a videotaped message which was smuggled out of Burma, *"[Min Ko Naing] is one of the student leaders who started the 1988 movement for democracy, and he has stood firm against all pressure from the authorities...[he] represents many others who are suffering from the injustices of the present military regime. That the prize has been awarded to him gives us all great hope, great pride, and great pleasure, because it shows that the world has not forgotten our cause...."*

Min Ko Naing is a leader with a very clear vision on the future of Burmese people and the country. The military regime has physically detained him in prison, but could not imprison thousands of Min Ko Naing of the young generation who are continuing their fight against the military regime idolizing him with the hope to snatch away the sun of liberty, democracy and peace in Burma and therefore, Min Ko Naing himself has rightly said, *"..... I'll never die.. Physically I might be dead, but many more Min Ko Naing would appear to take my place..."#*



## The Death of Justice for Rohingyas

**Dated: 2009-03-14 08:26:18**

On Feb 27,2009, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) said it will send hundreds of Rohingya boat people back to military-ruled Burma. Meeting at its 14th annual summit, the 10-member bloc agreed to compile and pool information and interviews on the Rohingyas, who washed up on the shores of Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia having fled oppression in Burma.

At the same time, quoting the Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win, the Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said, Burma is ready to take back the Rohingya migrants if they can prove they are of Bengali descent, which is a recognised ethnic minority there. Truly, there can be no appropriate word in the vocabulary

to denounce such a farcical statement of the Burmese Foreign Minister. The fact is, the Burmese military regime has snatched away Rohingyas' right to citizenship of Burma simply branding them as the descendants of the Bengalees and thus denied them of their ethnic status.



However, on March 28,2008, the then Prime Minister of Thailand Samak Sundaravej said, the Thai Navy is exploring a deserted island to place all the Rohingyas living in Thailand mostly as undocumented refugees. He made the statement after emerging from a two-hour long meeting of the country's National Security Council.

And in continuation of such policy, the Rohingya boat people have been recently dumped into the deep sea so that they get perished there beyond anybody's notice. But fortunately or unfortunately, they all did not perish. Some of them survived to draw international attention and thus cause a big headache not only for Thailand but for the ASEAN bloc. So, in order to

remove their headache, the ASEAN leaders found it the best way to hand over the Rohingyas to the Burmese army so that they can solve their problem of '*Rohingya headache*' once and for all by cutting the heads of the Rohingyas.

However, on Jan 27,2009, Thailand said Rohingyas do not face persecution in Burma. They said the Rohingyas caught in Thai waters are illegal immigrants, not refugees, and will never be let into the country.

"There is no reasonable ground to believe that these migrants fled from their country of origin for well-founded fear of being persecuted," the government said in a statement defending its treatment of the Rohingya boat people.

The definition of 'persecution' might be different for the Thai authority. But the Rohingyas have been fleeing Burma because of extreme human rights violations unleashed by the Burmese military regime to annihilate the entire Rohingya populations from Arakan which is a state under the Union of Burma. They have been subjected to severe persecutions including denial of their citizenship, a ban on marriage without government permission, severe restrictions of movement, religious persecution, extortion, land confiscation and restrictions on access to education. Arakan State is a closed zone for the media and so there is no scope for the world media to cover what is going on with the Rohingyas inside Arakan.

However, these unfortunate Rohingya refugee boat people have already suffered a lot. They have come back to life from the mouth of death after passing several weeks in the deep sea without food and water. And hundreds of them have perished in the deep sea after the Thai navy has left around 1,000 Rohingya refugees adrift in the ocean in boats without engine or food or water.

Being crowded in hundreds in rickety wooden boats, they have tried to escape persecutions and grinding poverty and washed ashore in Thailand and Indonesia. And again, while fleeing to Thailand, a group of these boat people were intercepted by the Burmese navy and the navy sailed their boat south toward Thailand. The survivors said soldiers from four boats boarded their vessel with wooden and metal rods and beat them.

A group of 78 refugees who survived being at sea for a month, then being beaten and burned, and later washed ashore in Thailand were having serious burns and wounds after their boat had been attacked and detained by the Burmese navy and then set on fire in the deep sea. There were many injuries on their backs, legs and many other parts of their body.

Later, a Thai court convicted those barefoot, disheveled Rohingyas on the charge of illegally entry to the country. A Ranong provincial court judge fined each defendant 1,000 baht (\$30)

a sum that none of them could produce. So he sentenced them to five days in prison. There were twelve minors who were too young to be tried in the court.

It is also true that even though the Rohingyas have been continuously mutilated by the Burmese regime from all sides of their life because of their Muslim religion, but their Muslim identity has never been able to draw minimum sympathy of the Muslim countries.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim majority-nation of the world. Malaysia and Brunei are two powerful Muslim countries of the world. They are also the members of the ASEAN. In order to sign the capital punishment for the Rohingyas for causing headache to them, they have also happily joined their hand with other ASEAN leaders on their decision to hand over the Rohingyas to the military regime.

Rohingyas are one of the most liberal Muslim communities of the world. Therefore, they love and prefer to introduce themselves with their secular ethnic name '*Rohingya*' which does not bear minimum significance of their religion.

But in spite of this, the Rohingyas have been continuously subjected to the worst human rights violations and a systematic genocidal operations because of their Muslim religion and also because of being majority in many townships of Arakan Sate of Burma before ( now Rohingyas are majority only in two townships in Western Arakan ).

Through the century-long persecutions, the entire Rohingya community have been reduced to a skeletal human group. Sub-human standard is the standard of their living. Most of them live like packs of rats in a sewer with half naked body which is full of hunger and grief. Most of them appear to be haggard and emaciated. Every day they struggle to arrange two meals a day for themselves and for their malnourished children. They leave their wives and children behind while they set out on perilous sea journey to find refuge and work in some other country.

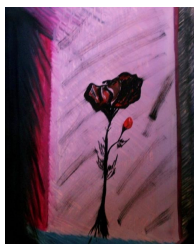
Of course such wretched condition of the Rohingyas is a matter of great amusement for the Burmese military regime. On Feb 9,2009, the Burmese Counsel Ye Myint Aung in Hong Kong, in a letter to his fellow diplomats, termed the "Rohingyas as ugly as ogres" meaning that the Rohingyas can not qualify as Burmese citizens because of their appearance.

"You will see in the photos that their complexion is dark brown," said the Burmese Counsel, referring to the Rohingya boat people. He went on to describe the complexion of Burmese as "*fair and soft, good looking as well.*"

Once the Rohingyas believed that it is only Burma which is a hell for them and if they can some how escape to somewhere outside Burma or if their luck can help them reach Thailand

or Malaysia or Indonesia through the sea route, then they will find sanctuary and will be able to save the life of their hungry family. But the decision of the ASEAN leaders have clearly demonstrated that those who will brave to go to them, will be pushed back to the mouth of death of the military regime.

There are huge nice and promising words in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also in different international laws or conventions which have been adopted to ensure justice and protection of the persecuted human beings. But for the Rohingyas those words are something like dreams. Their experience has made them clearly understand that those clauses or law or by-laws are not meant for the Rohingyas. They also clearly understand that their cry for justice and human rights will never save their life. They also understand that they were born to live as parasites of the human society. Today, they are forced to believe that it is only '**Pity**' which can save their life. And that is why one Rohingya boat tragedy survivor Mamoud Hussain, pleaded to the Thai court: "*Have pity on us. They [Burmese army] will kill me and my family if I go back.*" #



## The Draft Constitution of Burma's Military Rulers

**Dated: 2008-03-27 09:46:16**

Once upon a time, a lion, a leopard and a jackal entered into an alliance to go on the hunt together. They went out around the forests and hunted a deer, a goat and a hen. At the end of the day, they sat together to share the preys. The lion asked the leopard to distribute the preys into three shares with fair justice. The leopard said it would be justifiable to put the deer for the lion, the goat for himself and the hen for the jackal. But before, he could finish his verdict, the lion jumped upon the leopard with a big roar and torn his body into pieces.



The jackal was standing near by trembling in fear. Then the lion asked the jackal to distribute and then the jackal said it would be the best if you take the hen for your breakfast, the goat for your lunch and the deer for your dinner. Then the lion said to the jackal with a smile, "You are really wise. Where did you learn such a nice distribution with fair justice?" The jackal retorted, "I have learned it from your paws reddened with the bloods of the leopard."

Such is the case in the pro-military constitution which has been drafted by a military appointed forum and now which is set for approval during the May plebiscite to be followed by elections in 2010. The only difference is that the jackal was deprived of his share and here those who have drafted the constitution enjoy all types of modern amenities and gracious life styles, taking part in keeping the military machinery of repression alive, decade after decade. The ruling generals provide them unlimited opportunity to let them pass their life in celestial delight while these people pave all the ways for the army to perpetuate their gun control, pushing the common people to destitution and widespread poverty accompanied by the destruction of the entire political system and the administration of justice.

However, on February 19, 2008, Burma's military government announced that work had been completed on writing the draft of the proposed new constitution. The state radio and television said the 54-member Constitution Drafting Commission finished the draft after working on it for more than two months. Burma's Chief Justice and Chairman of the

Constitution Drafting Commission, Aung Toe, announced the charter's completion on state radio and television news broadcasts. Aung Toe said the draft was drawn up with the objective of ensuring a leading role in politics for the military. The guidelines for a new constitution were adopted by a stage-managed farcical National Convention last year after 14 years of on-and-off meetings, where the military hand-picked delegates have attended.

In fact, the draft constitution contains all the provisions to glorify the militarism in the governance in the guise of so-called "disciplined democracy". It is a blue-print for the army to legitimize its grip on power for indefinite period and where the head of the army will be the most powerful person in the country, with the ability to appoint key cabinet figures and suspend the constitution in the event of an emergency that he defines. It also bars Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from running in election whose party NLD won more than 80 percent of the vote in the general elections in 1990, a total of 392 out of the 485 seats contested in the 492-member assembly. And most importantly, the military rulers did not allow any input from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or her party NLD as well as other democratic and ethnic groups while drafting the state constitution.

Burma has been in a political deadlock since the military refused to recognize the election results of 1990 and in order to facilitate a national reconciliation on the democratic reforms, the UN Chief has appointed Ibrahim Gambari as an special envoy to Burma, after the military rulers violently quashed peaceful protests last September 2007 which was led by the revered monks. But during the recent visit of the UN envoy to Burma, it became further clear that the military rulers will not accept any role of the United Nations in determining the course of the country's political transition to what the ruling generals call "seven-point road map to democracy".

Ibrahim Gambari, the Nigerian diplomat, who has recently completed his third visit to Burma, proposed a more inclusive process of political change in the country and offered to send monitors to ensure that the outcome of the junta's planned referendum on the draft constitution is accepted as legitimate. The junta said "no" to both suggestions.

Gambari met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi twice during his five-day trip, but was denied a meeting with the junta's supreme leader, Senior General Than Shwe. Instead, he met with the members of the regime's "Spokes Authoritative Team," consisting of Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, Foreign Minister Nyan Win and Culture Minister Maj-Gen Khin Aung Myint.

During the meeting with the UN Envoy Ibrahim Gambari, junta's Information Minister Kyaw Hsan gave a clear message that the junta does not appreciate international interference in its affairs. He accused the UN of being biased against the regime. The state-run mouthpiece, *The New Light of Myanmar*, published the full text of Kyaw Hsan's indignant reaction to Gambari's role in releasing a statement from Aung San Suu Kyi following his last visit.

“Sadly, you went beyond your mandate,” said the information minister in his carefully worded reproach. “Some even believe that you prepared the statement in advance and released it after coordinating with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.” he added.

Kyaw Hsan went on to accuse the UN envoy of trying to “frame a pattern desired by western countries.” He also turned down a request by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon that the regime amend the draft constitution to “ensure inclusiveness”. In a letter dated February 19, 2008 to Burma's military supreme Senior General Than Shwe, the UN secretary general called for an amendment to the current draft constitution that would drop a clause excluding all Burmese nationals married to foreigners from running for election - paving the way for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to contest the planned 2010 polls. He urged the UN envoy to support the junta's "seven step" road map and stop pursuing alternatives suggested by western democracies. "We shall not accept any attempt to hinder or reverse the process of the seven-step Road Map. However, we will heartily welcome the positive suggestions of the UN to help implement the seven-step Road Map," Kyaw Hsan said. Asked by Gambari to consider releasing political prisoners—estimated by the UN and human rights groups to total more than 1,100—Kyaw Hsan said Burma has no political prisoners and that Suu Kyi was detained because she tried to disrupt the country's stability.

Similar arrogant remarks came from Thaung Nyunt, a member of the commission responsible for holding the referendum when Gambari met with him after meeting with Kyaw Hsan's team and offered UN technical assistance and help with facilitating observers at the planned referendum. Rejecting the offer of Gambari for international monitoring of the forthcoming referendum in May, Thaung Nyung said, "Holding the referendum on the constitution is within the country's sovereignty and for internal affairs in the past, we have never had observers from outside." He also said, "We have enough experience, but we take note of your offer."

Nevertheless, the junta's rejections of Gambari's suggestions caused a death blow to the mission of the UN envoy. It gave clear message that the ruling generals will do everything in their own way and they are not at all interested in listening to what the international community says. The junta's snub of Gambari made it further clear that the door for national reconciliation is no more open and that there can be no more development in the mission and mandate of the UN envoy.

However, the announcement of referendum of the military rulers is, in fact, a declaration of war against the people of Burma. It will further aggravate the country's political, economic and social crisis. Now, it is time for all the democratic forces of Burma to take pragmatic actions to foil the referendum bid of the military rulers on this pro-military draft constitution and to turn it into a flashpoint for unprecedented anti-government protests both at home and abroad.#



## U Kyaw Min of Burma: An MP without Citizenship

**Dated: 2008-02-05 09:13:02**

Burma, a resource-rich country of 678,500 sq. km and 57.6 million people which the military rulers have turned into a secret state of terror during its 46 years of unbroken despotic rule and where a Nobel Peace Laureate like Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and many other members of parliament are languishing in detention or jails years after years, the issue of U Kyaw Min can not usually make a story.

But the case of U Kyaw Min alias Master Shamsul Anowarul Hoque deserves special attention as it is different in nature from legal point of view and it carries a different perspective which is related to the fate of 4.5 million Rohingya ethnic minority of Arakan, Burma.



U Kyaw Min is a Rohingya by ethnicity. He has been sentenced to 47 years imprisonment and at the same time his wife Daw Tiza, his two daughters Kin Kin Nu and Way Way Nu and his son Maung Aung Naing have also been sentenced to 17 years imprisonment respectively. Now all of them have been passing a nightmarish life in the jail in Burma. The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) which is serving as a government in exile with its headquarter in Washington D.C., states about him:

*"U Kyaw Min(age 54), the representative-elect (MP) of Butheetaung Township constituency (1), belongs to the National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPHR) and a member of the CRPP, was detained on 17 March 2005, A statement was released by CRPP on last Union Day, in which U Kyaw Min took in active part. Besides, he met with ILO delegation, which visited Burma on 21st to 23rd of February 2005. He was sentenced to 47 years imprisonment on 29 July 2005. His wife, two daughters and a son were also sentenced to 17 years respectively. The junta banned the NDPHR under order No. 8/92 on 18 March 1992, and at that time U Kyaw Min was a member of the party's Central Executive Committee. U Kyaw Min received a Bachelor of Economics degree from the Rangoon Institute of Economics in 1968, and in 1969 he began working as a teacher. In 1983, he received a Diploma in Education and served as the Deputy Head of Buthidaung Township Educational Department. In 1985 he became a middle school principal but was dismissed from the position in 1989 because of his involvement in the August 1988 uprising. U Kyaw Min received 30,997 valid votes or 74 % in the 1990 elections." ([Source here](#))*

U Kyaw Min was born in the village "**Mikyanzay**" under Buthidaung Township in Arakan State of Burma in 1944. In 1988, he led anti government democratic uprising as the chairman of "Democracy Fighting Committee" of the Mayu Division and at the same time he was the executive member of Arakan State Peace Committee whose chairman was the then Head Monk of Arakan State and which was maintaining the law and order situation in the whole Arakan State during the two months of chaotic and volatile period of 1988 when there was virtually no governance in Burma. He was also the adviser to the " 88 Generation of Mayu Division". However, after the landslide victory of U Kyaw Min in the general election of 1990, the military rulers took it as a big dust on their eye. In 1992, he was put in detention for 3 months in the custody of the military intelligence during operation "prataya". He was again put in detention for 15 days when a senior official of the UN visited Buthidaung in Arakan State. In 1994, an insurgent group launched several offensives in western Arakan, then the military intelligence again put him in detention for 45 days even though he has never supported any separatism and has continuously raised his voice for the communal harmony and peaceful coexistence of all communities of Arakan particularly the Rohingyas and Rakhines under the Union of Burma. Finally, in March 2005, he was arrested from his residence in Rangoon and was charged under Section 18 Citizenship Law 1982 and section 5(j) Anti State Emergency Law.

It is worth mentioning that after he joined the CRPP (Committee Representing the People's Parliament) in 1998 at the invitation of Daw Aung Suu Kyie to represent the Rohingya ethnic minority, the main pro-regime party "NUP" (National Unity Party) invited him to join NUP to support military backed national convention and to resign from CRPP. But he did not agree and this has brought serious wrath of the military rulers and the ultimate consequence was the handing of 47 years imprisonment.

From February 21 to 23.2005, a high power delegation of ILO (International Labor Organization) has visited Burma and they have held an exclusive meeting with him and after the visit of that delegation, Burma was suspended from ILO and then the military rulers suspected him to have played an active role in the suspension of Burma from the ILO.

However, the imprisonment of U Kyaw Min under the allegation of not being the citizen of Burma, is a part of systematic persecutions of Rohingya ethnic minority of Arakan. U Kyaw Min has got his graduation from the Rangoon University on the subjects of *Bachelor of Economics*. As per the Burmese law, this subject is not allowed to study for foreigners. For 18 years, he has held a number of different positions in the government job, which is not allowed for someone who is not the citizen of Burma. It is also true that the Election Commission of Burma never allows a foreigner to participate in a general election. But despite the Election Commission knew it very well that he is a Rohingya, he was allowed to run the election after scrutinizing his nationality status.

It is worth mentioning that an amendment to the Burma citizenship law in 1982 deprived the Rohingyas of citizenship, suddenly making them illegal immigrants in their ancestral

motherland where they have been living centuries after centuries and whose presence in the region can be traced back to the 7th Century. However, this amendment has reduced them to the status of a Stateless Gypsy Community of the world.

The Burmese military rulers do not want to know and let others know that the Rohingyas have a long history, a language, a heritage, a culture and a tradition of their own that they had built up in Arakan through their long history of existence there and in order to garner support among the Buddhist majority Burma, the military rulers have continuously run their criminal propaganda against the Rohingyas to such a level that many people still believe that Rohingyas are foreigners and that they do not belong to Burma.

Particularly since the takeover of General Ne Win in 1962, the Burmese military rulers have been continuously stepping up their systemic program to ethnically cleanse the Rohingyas from their ancestral homeland and they have been altering the demography of the region through extermination and displacement of the Rohingya population, demolition and confiscation of Rohingya properties and construction of Pagodas and monasteries on the demolished sacred sites of the Rohingyas to obliterate the identity of the Rohingyas. In Arakan there is a vast number of written and unwritten discriminatory rules which govern the lives of Rohingyas. They are subjected to severe restrictions of movement, which affect their ability to trade and to seek employment as well as limit their access to health care and education. The Rohingyas must apply for written permission to travel out of their home villages, and another permission document to sleep overnight in another village. Akyab (Sittwe), the capital city of Arakan, is totally off limits to them. Marrying without permission – and permission is often denied or delayed – can bring hefty fines and prison sentences and turns children of such "illegal" marriages into stateless non-persons. For the decades-long downtrodden and poverty-stricken Rohingyas, complying with the myriad restrictions requires an onerous and mostly unofficial payment every step of the way. Arbitrary confiscation of land without compensation continues, either to provide land for new Buddhist settlers or to build and enlarge military camps, including plantations to grow crops for the military for their own food as well as for commercial purposes.

Since the promulgation of the new Burma Citizenship Law 1982, the Rohingya students are denied their basic rights to education outside Arakan. It is important to point out that all professional institutes are situated outside Arakan. Thus, the Rohingya students are unable to study there because of such travel prohibition. In recent years, the Rohingya students are prohibited from even going to Akyab (Sittwe) to attend Sittwe University for their studies. These draconian measures barring Rohingyas from attending universities and professional institutes are marginalizing them as the most illiterate section within the Burmese population. They are forced to embrace a very bleak future for them.

Traditionally, the Rohingyas are a farming community that depends on agricultural produce and breeding of cattle and fowls. Unfortunately, they are forced to pay heavy taxes on everything they own: cattle, food grains, agricultural produce, shrimp, tree, and even roof of

their homes. Even for a minor repair of their homes, they are forced to pay tax. They are required to report birth and death of a livestock to the authority while paying an arbitrary fee. Extra-judicial killing and summary executions, rape of women, arrest and torture, forced labor, forced relocation, confiscation of moveable and immovable properties, religious sacrileges, etc., are regular occurrences in Arakan.

As a result, severe poverty, unemployment, lack of education and official discrimination are compelling the Rohingyas to lead an inhuman life, causing a negative affect to each Rohingya, especially its youths and workforces. The future of the community remains bleak and exodus into neighboring Bangladesh has become a recurrent phenomenon. The new arrivals unfortunately often face arrests and/or pushback from the Bangladesh security forces. And there is no international agency to look after the interest of these stateless Rohingyas. Because of their lack of legal identity, they are not allowed to work or hold work permit by any name. To survive, many work as illegal workers in different countries of the world where in many places they and their children are deprived of basic human rights.

However, in response to the efforts of the UNHCR to facilitate the survival of Rohingyas, the military rulers have agreed by middle of 2007 to issue Temporary Registration Certificate (TRC) for a limited number of Rohingyas, enabling them to inland travel from township to township or to apply for marriage permission. The UNHCR is present in northern Arakan state for the past 14 years, monitoring the welfare of more than 230,000 Rohingya former refugees who returned from next-door Bangladesh from 1992 onwards.

Nevertheless, after the resignation of the rest three Rohingya MPs under the pressure of the military regime, U Kyaw Min who proved to have the courage to stare at the eye of death, remained the only member of parliament among 4.5 million Rohingya Community to represent the political future of the Rohingyas in the National Parliament of Burma, in different strata of the state level of Burma and also to represent the Rohingya community in the UN and other World Bodies. He is a visionary leader and an illustrious son of the soil of Arakan. His ideal remains a luminary for the Rohingyas to build up a future even standing in the debris. He inspired hundreds of thousands of Rohingya youths to think as to how to emancipate the stateless Rohingya community from their decades-long sufferings.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyie is regarded by the people of Burma as well as Rohingyas as the icon of peace and liberty and at the same time U Kyaw Min is regarded by the Rohingyas as the ray of hope as well as the crown of their respect which has been reflected in his landslide victory in the 1990 General Election and which has been recognized as a significant landmark for representation and which came after 26 years of military dictatorship. In fact, it was the first time when the people of Burma got an opportunity to vote for a government of their choice. It was one of the free and fair elections that had taken place in the South-East Asia region at that decade. He made unprecedented contributions for the cause of emancipation of the whole Rohingya community and as a great Rohingya scholar, he has shown the Rohingya community the road to emancipation through the restoration of communal harmony between Rohingyas and Rakhines under the Union of a democratic government of Burma.

U Kyaw Min tried his level best to inject the spirit of brotherhood among all communities of Arakan particularly the Rohingyas and Rakhines to work shoulder in shoulder for the build up of a prosperous future. He lives with dignity in the hearts of tens of thousands homeless Rohingyas. By imprisoning him on the charge of being an alien, the military rulers will not be able to wipe out his name from hearts of Rohingyas as well as other democratic forces of Burma. They have rather set with it another example of forcefully snatching away the rights of Rohingyas to citizenship and thus to compel them to born, live and die in this world without having the basic rights as stipulated by the UN Declaration of Human Rights.#

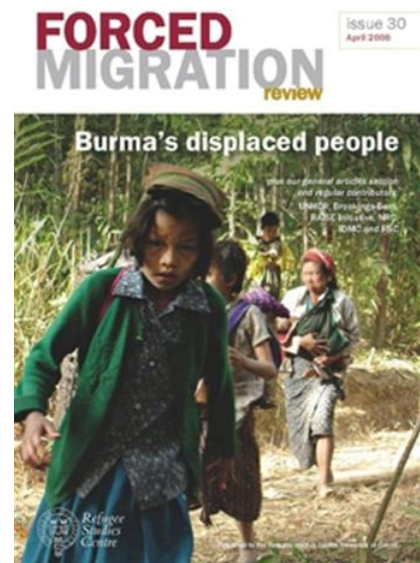


## Escape of People of Burma through the Tunnels of Death

**Dated: 2008-05-03 09:13:30**

On April 10, 2008, fifty-four Burmese migrants suffocated to death in a cold storage container while being smuggled to Thailand to escape appalling conditions in Burma. The tragic deaths occurred in Ranong Province on the west coast of Thailand when they were attempting to enter Thailand illegally in a group of 121 migrants including fourteen children being crammed into a sweltering container of 7 feet wide by 7 feet high and 20 feet long. Among the victims, 36 were women and 17 men, all apparently in their late teens or early 20s, and an eight-year-old child. Sixty-seven migrants survived the ordeal. Twenty-one migrants were hospitalized while the rest were detained by police for questioning.

On April 11, 2008, the Thai police charged 50 of 67 survivors of the disaster with the civil crime of committing illegal entry to the Kingdom of Thailand and accordingly they were convicted by a Thai court at the southern province of Ranong. The court ordered them to be deported to Burma and fined them \$32. Since they had no money, they were sentenced to three days in jail.



Television reports showed police and volunteer rescue workers remove the bodies from the back of the seafood van and images of the cargo-like container empty except for a few pieces of clothing. The dead migrants—many wearing little more than T-shirts, shorts and flip-flops—were seen laid out on the floor at the storage facility of a local charity. Most of the bodies were buried in Hindad Graveyard in Ranong, while some others were taken away by their relatives for the funeral elsewhere.

They sneaked into Ranong province from Burma's Victoria Point by fishing boat at night and were then packed into the container truck for the trip. Ranong province is about 460 kilometers south of Bangkok just across from Burma's Victoria Point which is regarded as a major point of trade between the two countries. Victoria Point is Burma's fishing port city and Ranong shares a 170 km (105 mile) water and land border with Victoria Point. Thailand shares a 2,400 km (1,490 miles) porous border with Burma.

On March 3, 2008, the Sri Lankan navy rescued 71 people mostly the Rohingyas of Burma on board a 50-foot vessel which was found drifting in the Indian Ocean after its engine failed while the people were heading for Malaysia or Thailand seeking employment. Twenty other people died on board from a lack of water and food as the boat drifted for 12 days. The

vessel was about 170 miles away from the eastern coast when the navy found it after being tipped off by fishermen.

However, the survivors of the disaster who witnessed the horror of how their companions were dying one by one beside them inside a locked, stifling and dark container, said the tragedy had not discouraged them from working in Thailand. They saw how horribly the hapless women, children and men were screaming and gasping for air. But such a tragedy does not discourage them to leave Thailand and to return to their near and dear ones. This is a manifestation of how tough the life is in Burma.

Thailand is a country of 64 million people with an area of 513,115 sq km with main exportable items of food including rice, seafood and live animals, office equipment, textiles and clothing, rubber. Burma is a country of 678,500 sq km and 57.6 million people with main exportable items of teak, pulses and beans, prawns, fish, rice, opiates, gems, metals, oil and gas and having many untapped natural resources. During the 46 years of unbroken despotic rule, the military regime has reduced Burma into one of the poorest countries of Asia with its economy riddled with corruption, stifling all dissent and wielding absolute power in the face of international condemnation and sanctions. Today, the average per-capita income of Burma is less than US\$200 per annum and Thailand's average per-capita income is \$3,737.

Everyday, the people of Burma have been escaping to the neighboring countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh in search of safety and food. Fleeing the economic collapse at home, many people come to Thailand in hope of finding work. They take menial and dangerous but low-paid jobs in sectors including construction, textiles and fisheries which are shunned by Thais. There are about 2 million migrants from Burma in Thailand. Out of them 141,000 refugees live in the camps, about 500,000 are registered migrants and up to 1,350,000 are unregistered. In Thailand, the migrant workers, legal or not, mostly earn about 3,000 baht (\$100) a month which is half the payment required by law for Thais.

However, in an effort to redress the shocks and grievances over the death of so many people, the Thai police has beefed up its border checks and started crackdown on the human-trafficking gang who smuggle the people of Burma to Thailand, while there is no voice of the Thai government against the reign of hunger and terror which the military regime has let loose in Burma and which has been forcing these distressed people to flee to Thailand. So, the tightening measures of the Thai Police to stop smuggling is like cutting the head to remove the head ache - just closing the door for the groaning people of Burma so that they can not see any light of hope through the tunnel.

The Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej is a staunch supporter of Burma's military junta. Returning from a state visit to Burma recently, the Thai Prime Minister said, "We want electricity. Burma has allowed us to build a dam. We want to sell goods there. Burma will build a port. Is that not good for Thailand?". Scolding the Western nations for picking on Burma's military regime, the Thai Prime Minister said that Westerners are overly critical of

Burma and he has now found respect for the ruling junta after learning that they meditate like good Buddhists should and also that the country lives in peace, turning a blind eye to the series of atrocities that the military regime has committed even against the revered monks who are the dharma sons of Buddha. Such observations made headlines in the world press and seriously shocked the international peace loving community.

In fact, the unstinted support of the Thai government together with China, India and Russia has strengthened the repressive regime of Burma. The Thai government has been acting like a marionette for the junta defending them at all costs in an effort to boost ties and forge closer economic and development cooperation with the regime.

However, the incident of the death of the migrants on their way to seek a better life in Thailand, has drawn great attention of the international community to the plight of the people of Burma who have been continuously trying desperately to escape the economic collapse at home risking their lives.

There is no denying the fact that the incident is not merely a tragic accident but it is a consequence of the deepening crisis of Burma which has stemmed from the multi-dimensional disarray in the socio-economic and political fabric of Burma. Since the takeover of Gen Ne Win in 1962, the military regime has turned the land into a cauldron leading to the monopolisation of the state power and adopting a policy of "total elimination" toward all non-Burmese ethnic groups and the country's democratic opposition as a whole.

Resultantly, gross violations of human-rights, conflicts, persecutions and genocidal operations against the ethnic communities have forced several millions of people to migrate within and outside Burma. The estimated number of internally displaced people in eastern Burma in 2007 is at least 503,000; the number could, however, be more than a million. Refugee International estimated that there are 236,500 stateless individuals and an estimated 200,000 refugees scattered throughout the region. According to human-rights groups, there are about 1,350 political prisoners in Burma.

The "four-cuts strategy" of the junta in the ethnic areas - cutting off food, funds, intelligence and recruits to the ethnic resistance armies, have caused a havoc to the life and property of the ethnic communities pushing them to an inferno through systematic rape, executions, forced labour, forced relocation and the destruction of villages, crops and food supplies as weapons to devastate and demoralise targeted groups.

However, by unilaterally holding a referendum on the pro-military constitution on May 10, 2008 defying the international outcries to restore peace and democracy in Burma, the military regime is going to push the country into an endless quagmire of socio-economic and political crisis. Now, in the wake of the failure and frustration of the Gambari mission, it is important for the international community to re-evaluate its approach to Burma's ruling generals and also for the UN to review its Burma policy in order to put an end to the crisis in Burma which can be a solution to stop the people of Burma from their continuous escape through the tunnels of death.#

## Relocation of Rohingyas in a Deserted Island in Thailand

**Dated: 2008-05-09 08:35:49**

In 1852, the government of the French Emperor Napoleon III opened a penitentiary island known as "Devil's Island" which was used for the settlement of convicts ranging from political prisoners to the most hardened of thieves and murderers. More than 80,000 prisoners who were sent to the harsh conditions at the disease-infested Devil's Island were never seen again. The world history has recorded it as one of the most infamous prisons of the human society in the earth.

It was a rocky, palm-covered inescapable island which rises 40 meters above the sea level.

Very few convicts managed to escape from this island by crossing the piranha-infested Moroni River via Dutch Guiana or overland to Brazil and then through hundreds of miles of swamp and jungle to the nearest settlement. A Dutch soldier, stationed on the Maroni River, once heard a piteous screaming from the river after dark and went to investigate. About 25 feet from the bank he saw a convict struggling forward, with the water boiling



Rohingyas staging peaceful demonstration in front of the Royal Thai Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on April 18, 2008 to protest the statement of the Thai Prime Minister to relocate Rohingyas in a deserted island in Thailand. Photo: RHRC

beneath him. Fist-sized chunks of flesh were being torn from his arms, face and chest. The piranhas were skeletonizing the convict before the soldier's eyes and soon the convict sank screaming into the dark brown water. No one knows how many convicts fell victim to the piranhas of the Maroni, but even this horror did not prevent them from trying to swim the river to escape the dreadful incarceration.

And from here Henri Charrière, the author of *Papillon* who was sentenced to life imprisonment in the 1930's for a crime he did not commit, succeeded to escape by throwing himself into the rolling waves of the ocean from a cliff using a bag of coconuts as his raft which drifted him towards the mainland after four days and three nights adrift in the sea. In 1970 *Papillon*, the autobiography of Henri Charrière, was published and it set the world on fire giving the horrific accounts of the misery and inhumanity of the French penal colony which was in use from 1852 to 1946 and the book sold millions, becoming one of the best sellers of all time.

However, the distressed people of Rohingya ethnic minority community of Arakan State of Burma have been continuously trying to cross to the neighboring countries like Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia and India in search of safety and food. The military regime has closed all the doors for their easy survival, suddenly making them illegal immigrants in their own motherland where they have been living for centuries, through an amendment in Burma's citizenship law in 1982. They are not permitted to move from even one village to another without the permission of the authority. The farming, which remained as the only resource for their survival, is also being axed from time to time by the repressive machinery of the regime through so many restrictions that life has been made unbearable for the Rohingyas in Arakan. Today, being uprooted from their own motherland, over 1.5 million Rohingyas are roaming in different countries of the world including Thailand as status less gypsy human beings.

Last November 26, 2007, a trawler and two engine boats overloaded with Rohingyas while preparing to cross to Malaysia, sank in the Bay of Bengal off the Maungdaw township where only about 150 out of the 240 could swim to the shore and have gone into hiding to evade arrest, and the rest have gone missing. Later, only 5 bodies were recovered. Last Feb 03 2008, a boat packed with Rohingya refugees drowned in the Naaf river which runs in south-eastern Bangladesh forming part of the 320 km border between Bangladesh and Burma. Later four bodies of the Rohingya women were found. On March 3 2008, the Sri Lankan navy rescued 71 people mostly the Rohingyas on board a 50-feet vessel which was found drifting in the Indian Ocean after its engine failed while the people were heading for Malaysia or Thailand seeking employment. Twenty other people died on board from a lack of water and food as the boat drifted for 12 days. The vessel was about 170 miles away from the eastern coast when the navy found it after being tipped off by fishermen.

These are a few which came to the notice of people, the concerned authority or the news media and there are many incidents which have slipped away unnoticed as the Rohingyas resort to unnoticeable routes in most cases to escape which are full of risks of life and death.

Such episodes amply demonstrate the appalling conditions in Arakan which have been driving the people to such desperate attempts to escape.

However, on March 28 2008, the Prime Minister of Thailand Samak Sundaravej said that the Thai Navy is exploring a deserted island to place all the Rohingyas living in Thailand mostly as undocumented refugees. He made the statement after emerging from a two-hour long meeting of the country's National Security Council. He expressed his intention to show the Rohingyas "life here (Thailand) will be difficult". But he could not show any single point of wrongs or crime that the Rohingyas have ever done in Thailand for which he has decided to banish the entire Rohingya ethnic community to a deserted island in violation of several UN and International laws especially the 1967 Protocol of the Geneva Convention regarding the statelessness.

The Thai Prime Minister is a staunch supporter of the Burmese ruling generals and he said he has now found respect for the ruling junta after learning that they meditate like good Buddhists should, turning a blind eye to the series of atrocities that the military regime has committed even against the revered monks who are the *dharma* sons of Buddha.

The Thai Prime Minister said, "We want electricity. Burma has allowed us to build a dam. We want to sell goods there. Burma will build a port. Is that not good for Thailand?" So, in order to build up a celestial empire, the Thai Prime Minister wants to offer the innocent Rohingyas as the requiem in the altar of tyranny of Burma's military rulers by sending them to the island of Death where if the Thai forces can place the Rohingyas today, then tomorrow the Burmese forces will land in that island and thus massacre the entire Rohingya men, women and children who escaped before from the paws of the Burmese military junta, beyond the notice of the international community.

What is going to happen to the Rohingyas when they are abandoned on that island? What will be awaiting there for them? Presenting a cartoon idea regarding the aftermath of the ostracization of Rohingyas in a deserted island, Dr. David Law said: *"Think of a small cartoon island -- a simple oval shaped piece of land with a couple of coconut palms surrounded by water. On the left side of the island is a Thai Navy boat forcing Rohingyas off the boat and onto the island." "On the next frame is the same island filled with Rohingyas. The Thai sailors have gone, but now the Burmese Navy sailors are landing on the right side of the island." "On the third frame are the Burmese sailors shooting down the Rohingyas, there is a lot of gun smoke and bodies on the island and floating on the water and blood is everywhere. On the foreground, in the water, a couple of fish are saying, "there are no witnesses except us".*

In fact, the statement of the Thai Prime Minister rocked the world conscience. It has sent a wave of shock and grief among the whole Rohingya community. It has sparked outrage of the international peace loving community. Due to decades long political oppression, economic exploitation, social degradation and cultural slavery, the Burmese military rulers have turned the peace loving Rohingyas into a powerless, defenceless and voiceless crippled community. They are under the threat of extinction through systematic genocidal operations of the Burmese regime.

Rohingyas have been crying in corners and dying in silence decades after decades. Now, if the humanitarian people of Thailand as well as the international community can not stop the deportation of the Rohingyas to the island of death, it will just add another notch of genocide on the scale of man-made tragedies of Rohingyas.

However, the Rohingyas hope that the sympathy of His Majesty King of Thailand to their plight can bring a halt once and for all to such an inhumane decision of the Thai Prime Minister. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej who is the world's longest serving monarch, is revered as having perfect Buddhist qualities. In Thailand, His Majesty King is accorded an almost divine reverence, with titles like *Phra Chao Yu Hua* (Lord Upon our Heads) or *Chao Chiwit* (Lord of Life) who has an extraordinary bond with the people and remained as a reassuring anchor amid any whirlwind of the country during his six decades on the throne of Thailand reigning through 17 military coups and 26 prime ministers.#

## Faces of Burma's Refugee: Children Behind the Prison Bars

**Dated: 2008-03-16 09:04:15**

On Feb 14, 2008, Saw Yan Naing of the Irrawaddy News ran a report with the picture of some children of Burma standing behind bars with other detainees in a crowded detention cell in Mae Sot, Thailand, saying that thirty-one Burmese illegal migrants - including three children and 18 women - were arrested by Thai police on Feb 12 after smugglers transported them to Ranong Province in Thailand. ([Source](#))



It is not a question whether to put these children in a crowded detention centre is legal or illegal - but the point that raises a grave concern at the first sight is - why these children are there. Everybody knows, Burma is burning. About 57.6 million people of this resource-rich country of 678,500 sq. km are groaning in the reign of terror of unbroken military rule for nearly half a century. The military rulers have burnt down the hopes and aspirations of tens of thousands of people into ashes. Hundreds of men, women and children run everyday to neighboring countries either to escape the brutalities of the army or to get rid of hunger. They do not know what awaits their fate in exile. But everyday they flee their motherland, which has been turned into an earthly hell under the gun control.

They know, their journey to the unknown destination is full of dangers ranging from starvation, thirst, detention, drowning or death, but the flow of escape of these distressed human beings continues unabated in search of safety and food. Sometimes, these ill-fated men, women and children cross the border in heavily loaded cargo boats of smugglers and sometimes in the tank of oil transport trailer without having a fresh air or water or food. There are innumerable cases of tragic deaths of those fleeing people onboard due to the lack of food and water in the deep sea after being adrift for many days or weeks due to the failure of engine boat or due to the loss of traveling direction.

In a free world, childhood connotes happiness and innocence. A child brings endless bliss and joy for a family and a ray of hope for a nation. Children are considered there as the future of a nation. There are enough mechanisms in a free world for children to let them grow spiritually, materially and physically so that they can become worthy citizens of a country. If they are healthy, if all of them receive education and live within a comfortable and safe environment, these elements will indicate that a nation has progressed.

Children need a world where they can laugh, they can play and they can grow with all qualities which make a worthy citizen of a country and when grown up, they can bring peace and prosperity for themselves, for their family, for their society or for their country. They need to live in a world where their voices are being heard. They need a world which is fit for children from all aspects and where all children will have the same rights and are of equal worth, where every child will have the right to have his or her basic needs fulfilled, where every child will have the right to protection from abuse and exploitation and where every child will have the right to express his or her opinion and to be respected.

In fact, these are the things which have been codified into different international laws or conventions. Through, the ratification of 1989 UN Convention on Rights of the Child, the international community agreed that some basic rights of children must be guaranteed. It is a very comprehensive document with regard to every aspect of rights of a child. The core of the Convention is described in Article 3: *"In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare organisations, courts, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary concern."*

The above paragraph demonstrates that all agencies of the state and private sectors must consider and accord priority to the interests of the child. Although the Convention does not define the interests of a child, it indirectly indicates that a child should have an upbringing in an environment in which a child can develop his/her full potentials in adult life. Common sense dictates that the fundamental interests of a child lie in the right to nutritious food, shelter, primary health care and education. If all these aspects of a child are cared for, the child will emerge as a worthy citizen.

But the faces of these children in the picture stir a sense of extreme helplessness. It makes clear that they are the children of a country which is not fit for children to lead a normal life. In fact, Burma is a country where innumerable children are living in a state of utmost miseries, cruelties and inhumanity. In other words, it is the grinding militarism which has pushed them to the worst level of wretched life - a situation which has compelled them to be illegal immigrants or break the law or whatever.

The rights of children are interconnected with economic progress of a country. So long a country is riddled with political unrest, social anarchy and grinding poverty, abuse of rights of children will turn out to be a common phenomenon. These children are from Burma where they are deprived of the very basic rights. Most of the children live there through an ordeal that is devoid of an iota of bliss. They get no scope for positive learning experiences they need to grow up happy and confident.

In Burma, there is no environment where the majority of parents can feed their children at home or where there is no "right to food to live" as literally can be said. Whenever people in extreme hopelessness and despair, facing nothing but repression, try to get themselves out of this situation, the military rulers strike them from all directions. They have destroyed the livelihoods of the majority of people in Burma. Only a handful that are close to the military regime and others who take part in keeping the machinery of repression alive obtain some benefit from the situation. Together with destitution, destruction of livelihoods and widespread poverty there has also been the destruction of the entire political system and the administration of justice.

It is a country where there is no scope for majority of parents to safeguard the rights of the children even within the purview of the family. Their parents can not save them from starvation and can not find ways for medical treatment when they are sick. The cases of associating children with baby food and innocent smiles are a matter of rarity there. Children die at the lap of their parents due to hunger and malnutrition. The tears of the parents roll down the cheek seeing their crying children, battered and bruised, physically and emotionally, every other day, but they have no way to prevent it.

While the people in the state organs of the military rulers do everything to protect their own children, they do not consider those of the common people as human beings. And at the same time, they kept no door open for the common people to let them know how to raise, not to mention care for, their children. From being made to sit on the floor at school in many cases as semi-human beings, to being punished or beaten inhumanly, children get the raw end of every deal. The mechanisms which can sow the seeds of inspiration in the minds of the children have been devastated.

People go to the zoo to find entertainment looking at the animals in the cage and they do not usually feel sorry for the animals for being put in the cage. But here the case is a little bit different. These children are in the same type of cages like zoo. But people who see their faces feel sorry and there may be many of those whose hearts bleed to see the plight of these children who have been chained by a set of law which determined them as illegal immigrants. Children who are considered to be the hope for a safer world, have been pushed to a state where they can not laugh, can not sing or can not play.

Only time can speak when these children can return to a position where they can fall asleep in the lap of their mothers in peace and without fear, where they will find a place which they can call their home, where they will get a school where they will learn all the lessons of civilized human society, where they will get a world which will be free of terror or screams of traumatized human beings and where they will find a world as has been portrayed by the

English Poet William Blake in his poem "*A Cradle Song*":

### **A Cradle Song**

Sweet dreams form a shade,  
O'er my lovely infants head.  
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,  
By happy silent moony beams

Sweet sleep with soft down.  
Weave thy brows an infant crown.  
Sweet sleep Angel mild,  
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sweet smiles in the night,  
Hover over my delight.  
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles,  
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,  
Chase not slumber from thy eyes,  
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,  
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep sleep happy child,  
All creation slept and smil'd.  
Sleep sleep, happy sleep.  
While o'er thee thy mother weep

Sweet babe in thy face,  
Holy image I can trace.  
Sweet babe once like thee.  
Thy maker lay and wept for me

Wept for me for thee for all,  
When he was an infant small.  
Thou his image ever see.  
Heavenly face that smiles on thee,

Smiles on thee on me on all,  
Who became an infant small,  
Infant smiles are His own smiles,  
Heaven & earth to peace beguiles.#



## **The Strategic Retreat of Burma's Military Rulers**

**Dated: 2008-03-08 09:04:27**

Burma's ruling generals who have rejected the verdict of about fifteen million voters of Burma in the General Election of 1990, blocking Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) from taking power for the last 18 years, made a surprise announcement recently that it would bring its pro-military constitution before the public for approval in May, setting the stage for elections in 2010.

The military rulers rejected the result of that election because people voted NLD and its like minded parties with more than 80 per percent of the contested seats, compared with less than 10 per cent by the pro-military National Unity Party(NUP)in order to govern the country instead of the military rule. Consequently, the ruling generals took revenge on the people of Burma by tightening their mechanisms to crush the ribs of the people from all aspects. They put the legitimate ruler of the country Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in detention. They imprisoned thousands of political activists and many high profile political leaders including those of the ethnic minorities like U Kyaw Min of Rohingyas and Shan leader Khun Ton Oo.



Dr. Sein Win meets French President Nicolas Sarkozy

However, this announcement of referendum on a sham constitution to be followed by the general elections in 2010 is, in fact, a strategic retreat of the military rulers who want to consolidate their power base under a so-called democratic guise and ,thus, continue their reign of terror for an indefinite period the way they have been ruling the country since 1962 resorting to different guises. This move is also a maneuver to deflect international pressure on the regime for a meaningful political reform.

At the same time, with this unilateral announcement which is aimed at duping the democracy seeking people of Burma as well as the international peace loving community, the military rulers have sidelined all the stages of the reconciliation process and the dialogue in particular which has been going on over the past between detained pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the regime's Liaison Minister, Aung Kyi. It gives a clear message that instead of introducing any meaningful political reform, the ruling generals are determined to go ahead with their so-called "roadmap to democracy" which is in fact a blue-print for the army to legitimize its grip on power after 46 years of unbroken military rule and where the head

of the army will be the most powerful person in the country, with the ability to appoint key cabinet figures and suspend the constitution in the event of an emergency that he defines.

In fact, a constitution is a paramount document of a country which can be termed as "a mirror reflecting the national soul". It reflects the hopes and aspirations of a nation. It recognizes and protects the values of a nation. It asserts the cultural, linguistic and regional diversity of a nation. It provides fundamental protections to civil liberties and rights. Its rules and principles govern the state organs and define the procedures of socio-economic and political structures and operations.

But the proposed constitution which literally can be termed as a set of *Military Commandments* and which has been drafted under military guidance with all the key measures to entrench the military role in the governance, is purely of the opposite dimension. It contains the same stick of barring Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from running in election and the pretext that they have fished to squeeze her is that she was married to a foreign citizen—her late British husband, Michael Aris, who died in 1999, and also because their children hold foreign passports, ignoring the fact that her party NLD won more than 80 percent of the vote in the general elections in 1990, a total of 392 out of the 485 seats contested in the 492-member assembly. And most importantly, the military rulers did not allow any input from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or her party NLD as well as other democratic and ethnic groups while drafting the state constitution.

However, soon after the announcement of holding the referendum as well as the general election, all the democratic forces of Burma burst out in outrage denouncing the heinous tactics of the ruling generals. The leader of Burma's US-based government in exile has called for a boycott of the junta-announced referendum on a draft constitution and of elections planned for 2010. Dr Sein Win, prime minister of the National Coalition Government of Union of Burma (NCGUB) said that neither a referendum nor an election would solve Burma's problems and would only legitimize authoritarian military rule. He also said that the announcement of a referendum, to be followed by an election in 2010, could not be accepted while opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi remained under house arrest. The regime hadn't even started talks with opposition leaders and ethnic groups, he said.

By unilaterally announcing the planned referendum and election, Sein Win said, the junta had sent a message that it was moving ahead with its seven point road map. "This means that they do not want to take the opposition into confidence, and they are totally ignoring the 1990 elections. As such we are not confident of the next election," he said. The Washington-based NCGUB is constituted and endorsed by representatives elected in the 1990 elections in Burma. Dr Sein Win, a cousin of Suu Kyi, has been leading it since 1990. Dr Sein Win said the NCGUB also opposed the regime's plan for a referendum and election "because of the present situation when there is no freedom of media, and no rule of law. Under these circumstances, people should not take part in any of those processes."

The regime should hold talks with Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, and with ethnic leaders, Sein Win said. Then, he added, "We will have our solution."

Dr Sein Win said it is also time for the UN Security Council to give a stronger mandate to the UN Secretary-General's Office and the UN Envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, allowing them to play an effective mediatory role in bringing about an equitable solution to the political deadlock in Burma.

Similarly, all other democratic forces of Burma including the NLD, the 88 Generation Students, a coalition of leading democracy activists, Alliance of All Burma Buddhist Monks and Democratic Alliance of Burma(DAB), an alliance of pro-democracy exile organizations and ethnic insurgent organizations like the National Democratic Front, All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma, All Burma Young Monks' Union (ABYMU), Chin National Front (CNF) and many other groups, have also denounced in the strongest term the attempt of the ruling generals to legalise the military dictatorship with its sham constitution.

The move of holding the referendum and the general elections has also drawn serious criticism and scorn from the international peace loving community. On Feb 20.2008, nine Nobel laureates led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama urged the UN Security Council and individual governments to impose an arms embargo on Burma's military junta.

They said in a joint statement: "We appeal to the members of the Security Council and the international community to take action quickly on measures that will prevent the sale of arms to the Burmese military, including a ban on banking transactions targeting top Burmese leaders, as well as state and private entities that support the government's weapons trade."

Besides Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, other signatories to the joint statement are Shirin Ebadi, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Elie Wiesel, Betty Williams and Jody Williams. More Nobel laureates are expected to join the group. The statement singled out China, Russia, India, Ukraine and Poland as providers of arms to Burma.

The statement also regretted the lack of progress towards national reconciliation in Burma. "In spite of the overwhelming desire of the Burmese people for political change the regime has made no overtures and no progress on national reconciliation," it said.

The statement described the regime's recently announced timeframe for a referendum on the draft constitution and general elections as flawed. Tutu called it a complete sham.

The government's "road map" failed to include participation by the National League for Democracy (NLD). "The NLD and Burma's ethnic nationalities must play an inclusive role in determining a negotiated settlement and transition to democracy," the Nobel laureates said.

Referring to the arms embargo clamped on the apartheid regime in South Africa, Tutu said: “Now it is time for the UN and individual countries to immediately impose [an] arms embargo and targeted banking sanctions on Burma following the ‘Saffron Massacre’ [the crackdown on the September 2007 demonstrations] .”

However, the upcoming constitutional referendum will be a major battle field between the military regime who wants to rule the country forever, and the people of Burma who want to be free from military reign of terror. And in order to foil all the heinous plots and strategies of the ruling generals, it is time for all the democratic forces of Burma to exert their utmost efforts to prove the referendum bid a flashpoint for unprecedented anti-government protests and, thus, to turn it into a total failure.

It is the National Coalition Government of Burma(NCGUB) who can bridge all the chasms among all the democratic forces of Burma both inside and outside the country and let them have a concrete and pragmatic strategy to prove that what the ruling generals are trying to do, can never rally support of the people of Burma whom they have been trampling decades after decades.

The military rulers will resort to all the attempts both covertly and overtly to bring at least some face-saving success to the referendum misusing all the state organs as well as through their puppet parties like National Unity Party which is a reincarnation of late dictator Ne Win’s Burma Socialist Program Party which ruled the country with an iron fist until 1988 and was defeated in the general elections of 1990 and similarly, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), which is known as a junta-backed notorious organization for its attack on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters, especially the Depayin attack in 2003 and the 2007 uprising.

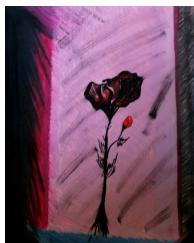
Now, it is highly important for the NCGUB and all other democratic forces of Burma to take a comprehensive program and chalk out elaborate strategy to face the situation from all dimensions. It is also very important for them to mobilize the people's power in all those countries that have been still backing the military rulers particularly Russia and China. The government of these two countries have choked the outcries of the groaning people of Burma by applying their veto power in the UN Security Council. The people of many other countries who have been supporting the regime and where their people given their governments the mandate to govern their country to bring peace and prosperity in their own country, must know with more and more details that their governments have been providing all out support to kill the voice of peace and prosperity of 57.6 million people of Burma which is a resource-rich country of 678,500 sq. km. Their people must comprehend the extent of atrocities perpetrated by the military rulers on its civilians. The pens of their journalists and human rights activists must reproduce the bloods and tears of the people of Burma. Their people must take to the streets to compel their governments to stop backing of the military rulers of Burma.

To achieve that end, it is immensely important for the NCGUB, NLD and all other democratic forces of Burma to concentrate, among all other initiatives, on launching an extensive media campaign targeting the people of those countries. They need to let them hear the cries of the

children of Burma each and everyday, to let them see the wailing of the victims of military atrocities, to let them feel what can be the pain of leaving one's motherland where he was born and where he has grown up and what can be the agonies of being separated from one's near and dear ones forever.

The people inside Burma sometime burst out in protest, sometime cry in corner and sometime shed tears in silence. But they have no scope to show the world what is going on there. So, it is the patriotic people of Burma in exile who can give voice to those voiceless people groaning inside Burma and to mobilize whatever resources they have to show the international community the real picture of brutalities. Their pains in exile must be turned into a power to make Burma a land of peace, happiness and prosperity.

As a part of the programs to turn the referendum bid of the generals into a failure and to give a serious knock to the world conscience, a specific program can be announced by Burma's Prime Minister in exile, Dr Sein Win to observe hunger strike worldwide on the day of referendum. The hunger strike program can be observed en masse or in single. On that day, each and every national of Burma in exile can go even in single to the nearest news media office or the government office and sit there in front of the main gate bearing banner or festoon or at least with a hand written placard condemning the referendum and asking for solidarity of the international community. Such a program can demonstrate what immense can be the impact of the power of a non-violence movement. #



## **Rakhine-Rohingya Friendship Hospital**

### *A Short Story*

**Dated: 2009-04-09 08:39:43**

#### **Part: 1**

August 15, 2007: The Burmese military regime removed subsidies on fuel causing a rapid and unannounced increase in prices. The government, which has a monopoly on fuel sales and is sold only by a state-owned fuel company – Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, raised prices from about \$1.40 to \$2.80 a gallon, and boosted the price of natural gas by about 500%. This increase in fuel prices led to an increase in food prices and brought a disastrous situation for the common people in maintaining their livelihoods.



Aung Kyaw is the headmaster of the Pitu Rwa School. He feels extremely tormented to see the plight of the common people. He was one of the prominent student leaders of the Rangoon University who led the demonstration against Gen Ne Win's military regime for the honorable funeral of the former UN Secretary General U Thant.

U Thant who was born on January 22, 1909 and died on November 25, 1974, was a Burmese diplomat and the third Secretary-General of the United Nations, from 1961 to 1971. He was and still is regarded by the people of Burma as a most serene and brightest son of Burma. After his death, the Rangoon University students wanted to put his body to final rest in an honorable site which would stand for the people of Burma as the milestone of glory and pride. But Gen. Ne Win wanted to bury the body in a common cemetery of "Kyandaw" where the body of notorious Khine May Than (Ne Win's first legal wife) was buried. Thus, there arose a tense situation centering the burial of the body of U Thant. At one stage, once the students seizing the body buried it in the ground of the Students Union Building of Rangoon University on 10th December 1974. But next morning at about 5 am, the army entered the campus using tanks. The Chancellor Gate was first bulldozed off. The army began arresting everybody on the way and herded them off in the military trucks. When the soldiers started digging for the body, students began to march onward to stop them. Then began indiscriminate shooting! When the body was raised, there was a tug-of-war over the body.

All those students who rushed onwards to snatch the body of U Thant, were shot dead. A popular high school girl student, Khin Khin Myint (?), was one of those who clung on to the coffin of U Thant. First the soldiers began to kick her down to depart her from the coffin, later seeing that she was not leaving the coffin off, the soldiers shot her down. Thus, the UN flag with which the body of U Thant was wrapped, was drenched with the blood of the students. (Ref: Dr Shwe Lu Maung's book 'Burma: Nationalism and Ideology').

## **Part:2**

Aung Kyaw has two daughters. The name of his elder daughter is Khin Khin Myint which he named after the name of that popular high student girl Khin Khin Myint who sacrificed her life for the honor of the former UN Secretary General U Thant. The name of his younger daughter is Khin Khin Nu.

However, after the eccentric hike in the fuel price on August 15,2007, the price of rice had jumped 10 percent, meat 15 percent, and a standard plate of noodles at a food stall had tripled. By the end of September, the price of a kilogram of rice had increased from around 300 kyat to 500 kyat, while a dozen eggs had doubled in price from 600 kyat to 1,200 kyat. People could no longer afford to buy rice and started to eat rice soup. And those who could not even afford to eat rice soup, they just started to eat corn.

Aung Kyaw recalls the story of *A Tale of Two Cities* where, portraying the grim scenario of the oppression of the ruling class of the aristocrats in France before the French Revolution, the writer Charles Dickens wrote:

'In France, the ruling class of aristocrats has oppressed the people for so long that many are starving. The peasants are treated cruelly by the corrupt ruling class, which lives in lavish opulence.... The peasants are so hungry and thirsty that they have resorted to scooping wine out of the dirt; the scene illustrates how dire is their situation.'

## **Part:3**

Aung Kyaw can clearly understand what is going to happen and what grim showbiz the army would orchestrate to brutally suppress the people's demonstration.

Everyday, soon after Aung Kyaw returns home from the school, he picks up his radio and listens to the news of BBC, Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. He tries to know what exactly happens in the country. He hardly rolls his eyes on the newspapers of the country because he knows it simply serves as the mouthpiece of the military junta.

By December 2007, Aung Kyaw writes in his diary:

In response to the increase in fuel prices by the government on August 15,2007, the people of Burma took to the streets in Rangoon and all other major cities of the country under the leadership of the revered monks which popularly became known as the Saffron Revolution.

Peoples' demonstrations began on August 19, 2007. The government moved to silence the protest through all brutal means. The security forces began arresting and beating demonstrators. 13 prominent Burmese dissidents including Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zeya, Ko Jimmy, Ko Pyone Cho, Arnt Bwe Kyaw and Ko Mya Aye were arrested on August 21, 2007.

Thousands of troops converged on foot and trucks in different areas of Rangoon , Mandalay , Sittwe etc to crack down on the demonstration. .. According to UN estimates, more than 3,000 protesters were arrested and at least 31 people were killed in the crackdown. Monasteries became the target of the daily raid of the army. They imprisoned many highly respected senior monks as the instigator of the protest. Many of the imprisoned monks were high ranking abbots of monasteries who spent even 30 to 40 years in teaching the Buddha Śāsana - the teachings of the Buddha. In the prisons, their robes were taken off and were forced to wear prison uniforms. In fact, for a monk it is the most painful event of life to take off his robes that he has worn to dedicate his life on the path of Buddha.

It is true that the junta could take off their robes, but they could not strip of their spiritual monkhood. Despite being forced to wear prison uniforms and being officially stripped of their membership of the Sangha, they continued to practice their faith and meditation. There were many monks who have been sent to the prison labor camps to be chained and shackled from where the chances of return are very low because of malaria like that of the Devil's Island. For instance, it is the concrete floors where the prisoners have to lie without any beds where the gusty winds pass through. The food that they are given to eat are so bad that a pig would shake his head and refuse to eat when he sees that coming – even though pigs are known to have the habit of eating anything.

The brutal crackdown of the Burmese army on the peaceful demonstrators reminds Aung Kyaw what Charles Dickens wrote in his *A Tale of Two Cities*:

*'Repression is the only lasting philosophy. The dark deference of fear and slavery, my friend, will keep the dogs obedient to the whip, as long as this roof shuts out the sky.'*

#### **Part: 4**

Kyaw Hla is an active youth member of the National League for Democracy (NLD). He has done his graduation in medicines from the Medical University of Rangoon in 2006. He was one of those who have led the anti-regime demonstrations in Rangoon on August 19, 2007 soon after the hike in the fuel price. The security forces have been hunting for him. Kyaw Hla's father Maung Hla is a close friend of Aung Kyaw. Kyaw Hla escapes to Pitu Rwa by September 2007 to evade arrest and starts living in the house of Aung Kyaw.

Aung Kyaw's elder daughter Khin Khin Myint is also a staunch supporter of Burma's pro-democracy movement. The whole family of Aung Kyaw cordially welcomes Kyaw Hla. As time runs by, a close relationship grows up between Dr Kyaw Hla and Khin Khin Myint. By December 2007, they decide to marry and build up a happy castle and for their wedding ceremony, they fix the following January 4th, which is Burma's independence day.

Laila is a Rohingya girl of neighboring Ombadi Rwa. Her father Abdul Hamid is a teacher of the Pitu Rwa School and Khin Khin Myint is a student of Abdul Hamid. Every week Khin Khin Myint and her younger sister Khin Khin Nu visit the house of Abdul Hamid. With the passage of time, a close friendship grows up between Khin Khin Myint and Laila. They become so close that they share almost each and every matter of their joys and sorrows.

One day, Khin Khin Myint tells Laila that her fiancé Dr Kyaw Hla has decided to permanently settle in Pitu Rwa. She also tells her that he wants to set up a mini hospital somewhere in the middle of Ombadi Rwa and Pitu Rwa where he will arrange free treatment for the extremely poor people, but he has no financial strength to set up the hospital. Laila carefully listens to Khin Khin Myint but does not make any comment.

Laila decides to sell out the ornaments of her late mother to set up the hospital and present it to her bosom friend Khin Khin Myint. And soon Laila goes to Kyawtaw bazar and sells out the ornaments.

#### **Part: 5**

The day for the wedding ceremony approaches near. Dr Kyaw Hla asks Khin Khin Myint if there is something which she expects from him as a special gift. Khin Khin Myint asks Dr Kyaw Hla to buy a cage with two white doves and a wall clock to present her on the day of the wedding ceremony. Dr Kyaw Hla amazingly asks her why she wants such strange types of gifts. Khin Khin Myint says she would reply it on the day of wedding.

On the day of wedding ceremony, Laila attends with a big wallet of money to gift it to her friend Khin Khin Myint for the dream hospital for her husband Dr Kyaw Hla. Both Khin Khin Myint and Dr Kyaw Hla become astonished to see the craziness of Laila. After sometime, Dr Kyaw Hla brings his special gifts of the cage of the white dove and a wall clock and hands it over to Khin Khin Myint.

Receiving the gifts with thanks from her husband, Khin Khin Myint explains to her father Aung Kyaw, Dr Kyaw Hla and Laila:

'I will put these white doves in the cage and I don't know how long they will have to stay in the cage. I will free them only the day the Nobel Peace Laureate Daw Suu will become free. I will also switch off this clock to remain dead. I will switch it on only when Burma will get freedom from the military rule.'

After few days, Dr Kyaw Hla starts works for the setup of the mini hospital and within one month it gets a shape. Dr Kyaw Hla names it as 'Rakhine-Rohingya Friendship Hospital'.

#### **Part: 6**

Feb 12, 2008. It is the date of birth of Burma's Independence Hero Gen Aung San. Aung Kyaw issues a notice for all the teachers and students of the school to attend a discussion meeting on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Gen Aung San.

The meeting starts by 10 am. Teachers and students deliver their speech on different aspects of the glorious struggle of Gen Aung San for the independence of Burma. Finally, Aung Kyaw picks up his diary and reads out to the audience:

### **Mind Without Fear**

*By Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore*

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up  
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

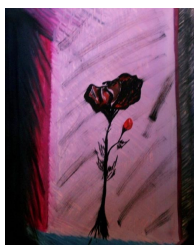
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action---  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

At night army raids the house of Aung Kyaw. They find out the diary. They take him to the army camp. After some one month, police produce him before the court and the judge hands him down 65 years imprisonment. #

*P.S: All the characters in the story are fictitious.*



## **The Gambari Mission: A Failed Bid?**

**Dated: 2008-01-04 10:10:52**

The UN which is believed to be the last resort of hope for the hopeless people, has appointed Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, a Nigerian Diplomat on a mission to bring peace through restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma, a country which has been groaning under the military boot since 1962, when Gen. Ne Win seized the power through a coup overthrowing a democratic government.

The UN has been pressing for a meaningful participation for Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic and ethnic minority leaders in the process of drafting a national constitution, and also to release all political detainees. And the voice of the UN pressure has got louder particularly since the beginning of the Saffron Revolution beginning from August 15, 2007.



Mr. Gambari holds the record of being the longest serving Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations from

January 1990 to October 1999, having a degree of M.A. in 1970 and his Ph.D. in 1974, both in Political Science/International Relations from New York's Columbia University. He also served as President of the Security Council on two occasions (May 1994 and October 1995). He has chaired the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, which has successfully seen the demise of the long-standing social injustice and the establishment of democratic rule in South Africa. Professor Gambari also chaired the UN Special Committee on Peace Keeping Operations from 1990-1999.

However, after the brutal crackdown by the Burmese military rulers on the biggest anti-junta protests for nearly 20 years, which was led by the Monks and which was known as "Saffron Revolution", the UN Chief Ban Ki-moon appointed Professor Gambari as a special envoy to Burma to assist "in the process of national reconciliation through dialogue." And since then, Professor Gambari has already paid two visits to Burma in his bid to bring a success to his agenda. But it appears that all his efforts are going to end in fiasco as the Burmese military rulers have been continuously defying all international outcries and they are still firing warning shots to let the United Nations and the international community know that it has no intention of caving into outside pressure for domestic political reform.

Most unfortunately, the 15-member Security Council of the UN has failed to adopt an unanimous resolution to compel the despotic regime to bow to international pressure and even to condemn the bloody crackdown on mass street protests in Burma which was spearheaded by the monks, due to stiff resistance from veto-wielding council members China and Russia. They have merely expressed "concern" about the government crackdown and called for "restraint." They deplored violence used against the peaceful demonstrators and stressed on the importance of early release of all political prisoners. They also reaffirmed "strong and unwavering" support for the Good Offices Mission of Mr. Gambari and for early return to facilitate tangible results. It called on the Government and all parties concerned to work together towards a de-escalation of the situation and a peaceful solution, which are in fact, contrasted with expressions of global outrage.

Similarly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) , which groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, has been following a soft stance on Burma in line with its general policy of non-interference in domestic affairs, hoping that they would use its influence on the military rulers to persuade it for a peaceful transition to democracy and free political prisoners, including democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

It is clear that Professor Gambari, during his two visits to Burma, could not bring any tangible result except some face-saving episodes like meeting Daw Aung San Suu Kyie who has spent 12 of the past 18 years under house arrest, meeting the army generals and releasing some local criminals and some Buddhist monks by the regime.

On the other hand, the military regime has specifically outlawed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the UN involvement in the political process of Burma, saying openly in the wake of Mr. Gambari's visit, "No assistance or advice from other persons is required " and this is a clear manifestation of bracketing of Mr. Gambari and UN's role in the democratization process of Burma. And Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Min Ko Naing, Rohingya leader U Kyaw Min, Shan leader Khun Ton Oo and all high profile political prisoners who have the courage to stare at the eyes of death without any fear, are still held under house arrest and in prisons. And most unfortunately, Min Ko Naing and his close colleagues who have been the instrumental in the Saffron Revolution are thrown into death row cells with murderers and killers, though they are high profile political detainees. And at the same time, the military regime has been continuing rounding up several thousand political activists, including the Buddhist monks and students.

Given the fact, the junta's hard-line stance is crystal clear that they have the least intention to listen to what the international community says and they are determined to keep the people of Burma under the boot of the military with their usual slogan, "It is our internal affair(?)." and they will go ahead with their so-called path to political reform via their own "roadmap to

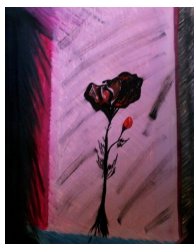
democracy" which is in fact a blue-print for the army legitimising its grip on power after 45 years of unbroken military rule and where the head of the army will be the most powerful person in the country, with the ability to appoint key cabinet figures and suspend the constitution in the event of an emergency that he defines.

Under the above circumstances, it is clear that the Gambari Mission is poised to end in fiasco as there is no point so far which he could usher in a new ray of hope for the people of Burma.

The only thing which is happening to a significant level is that the world is becoming more and more aware about the plight of the people of Burma and consequently, they will express more anger over the sufferings of the people of Burma. And in order to pacify the anger of the international community, the UN will continue to send more high profile diplomats to Burma to persuade the army generals to end their atrocities while the Security Council which is believed to be the Custodian of World Peace, will continue to remain only "seized" with the matter of expressing "strong support" to the dispatch of the UN Envoys and also to deplore the military violence against the unarmed civilians, without taking any effective decision to find out a genuine solution to the decades-long problem, arguing that the Burma issue does not represent a threat to international peace and security.

On the other hand, the people of Burma will continue to born and die under the military reign of fear without any taste of peace and civic liberty in their life while the military rulers will continue their repressive reign forever as Alfred, Lord Tennyson said in his poem, "The Brook":

***"For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever."***#



## Arakan: The Land

Dated: 2007-07-22 09:54:09

The blood-drenched Arakan is being tormented decades after decades in a terrible death throe which has germinated from the grim showbiz of the Reign of Terror of the military rulers. The people of Arakan who had been once living in peace and perfect amity, have to witness many often recurrent phenomenon of communal violence, social anarchy and widespread unrest goaded by the despotic military rulers where the voice of peace and communal harmony is a far cry.

Once upon a time, Arakan was known as a land of the plenty with a vast fertile agricultural land, which literally can be called the "*Rice Bowl of Asia*". Geographically, Arakan is a picturesque and narrow mountainous strip of land of about 40,000 square kilometers between the Arakan Yoma mountainous range and the Bay of Bengal stretching north to the south along the coastal line. It is naturally separated from the mainland Burma by the Arakan Yoma mountain range. It is inhabited by many communities like the Rohingyas, Rakhines, Chakmas, Hindus, Christians, Mros, Khumis, Kamens and some hill tribes. Once, all these communities had been living in peace and perfect amity. But with the annexation of Arakan with Burma in 1784, this land of peace and plenty has turned into a "trouble conglomerate" of distressed human beings because of state-sponsored ethnic, racial and communal violence.

Today, Arakan is a land of restlessness, antagonism, discrimination, persecution, anarchy and disappointment. The peace-loving people are passing their life in utmost grief and distress, fear and frustration. They are victims of systemic oppression, socio-economic and political exploitation and horrendous conspiracies of the military rulers. And it is the most terrifyingly fact that the havocs of the communal violence have been pushing thousands of innocent men, women and children towards annihilation.

As history speaks, Arakan was once an independent sovereign state for many centuries. It



was closely linked culturally as well as politically with Bengal (now Bangladesh) because of its geographical location from where both Hinduism and Buddhism spread in the region.

Although, Hinduism did not sustain for a long period until the region came into close contact with Muslim Arab traders who introduced Islam to the local people as early as the 7th century. From time to time, many of them have gotten permanently settled in the region. Later, their influence spread fast throughout the region and in the succeeding centuries, it reached such a scale that their role was considered to be the predominant factor in the ascension to the throne. That's why, in 1406, King Naramaikhla, a Buddhist, assumed the Muslim name Sulaiman Shah and subsequently became a Muslim.

It is worth mentioning here that after King Sulaiman Shah was defeated by the Burman invaders, he took refuge under the Muslim ruler of Bengal, Nasiruddin Shah. *[Just pause for a moment to reflect on this epoch-making event. Why would a Buddhist ruler seek refuge in a Muslim-run territory while there were other Buddhist-run territories in the neighborhood?]* Later, he was restored to the throne in 1430 by the troop of the Bengal Sultan. Subsequently, he became a tributary of the Sultan and this led to a strong cultural interaction between Arakan and Muslim Bengal.

The successors of Naramaikhla not only adopted Muslim titles, but also inscribed the "*Kalima-La ilaha illallah*" in their coins and some of them became Muslims.

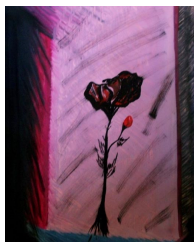
Nevertheless, the murky history of the enslaved Arakan begins with the annexation of Arakan with Burma in 1784 by the Burman invader King Bodawphaya. And soon after that Arakan was again annexed to the territory of the British-India during the time span of 1824-26 after a war with Burma. *Northern Arakan was in fact part of the province of Bengal under British India, and the current border was only fixed when Burma became a separate British colony in 1937.*

In 1942, there was an administrative vacuum in Arakan, during the war with Japan when Allied Forces retreated from Arakan leaving huge arms at the hands of some Rakhine communalists who turned those arms against their Rohingya Muslim neighbors, massacring tens of thousands of innocent Rohingyas mostly in eastern Arakan where the Rakhines were in majority. As a tit for tat regrettably some Rohingya Muslim extremists caused heavy casualty to the life and property of innocent civilian Rakhines in the western Arakan where the Rohingyas are majority.

Unfortunately, this grim genocidal tragedy remained unnoticed and thus slipped away from the world history almost unrecorded because of the pre-occupation of the international community with the World War II. At that time, nearly 50,000 Arakanese people from Rakhine and Rohingya communities fled from Arakan to Bangladesh to escape the massacre, many of whom went as far as to Rangpur district (in north-west corner) of Bangladesh seeking shelter in the refugee camps. The war brought in its wake famine and human miseries in Bengal affecting many of those refugees.

However, since the independence in 1948, expulsion of the Rohingyas from their motherland, Arakan, became almost a permanent feature of the country. By the end of 1950 and in September of 1964, almost 33,000 and 5,000 Rohingya refugees, respectively, crossed to Bangladesh. **The Operation Dragon King (*Nagaminh*) of 1978** was the biggest operation against the Rohingyas when about 300,000 innocent Rohingyas were uprooted and forcibly pushed into Bangladesh. The last Pogrom of 1991/92 is another horrendous notch on the long scale of man-made tragedies when Rohingyas were indiscriminately massacred by thousands and again about 300,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh trekking along the hazardous jungles and crossing the roaring rivers.

Today, 1.5 million Rohingyas have been living as undocumented refugees in different countries of the world like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, etc.#



# The Cultural Affinity of Rohingyas with Bengal

**Dated: 2009-04-21 08:54:30**

Ignoring the glorious historical records of the Rohingya Muslims in the ancient Arakan Kingdom, the Burmese military regime and the anti- Rohingya camps brand them as the Bengali immigrants of the 123 years of British Colonial rule from 1827 to 1948 in order to turn Arakan into a "***Rohingya-less***" land on the pretext of the close affinity of the Rohingyas in terms of ethnicity, language and religion with the Bengalis particularly the Chittagonians of Bangladesh. All the historical records irrefutably testify that the Rohingyas are an indigenous group of the ancient Arakan having its own culture and heritage and a few historical records are being present here for one's easy reference.

## **The Multicultural Society of Ancient Arakan**

Arakan, which had an area of more than 20,000 sq. ml. till the British period, is situated among India in the North, Burma in the East and People's Republic of Bangladesh in the West. To the south, it extends up to Haigri Islands and is bounded on the south-west by the Bay of Bengal. Today, the area of Arakan is located between Lat. 16' 00" N- Lat. 21' 20" N and Long. 92' 20" E- Long. 95' 20" E. Arakan of today's Burma and Chittagong of today's Bangladesh share a 320-kilometer border. Arakan is now a State under the Union of Burma.



Historical evidences show that the ancient Arakan was a rendezvous of people of different cultures and religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The primitive rulers of Arakan were of Hindu religion. And Buddhism was introduced into Arakan during the lifetime of Buddha himself. According to Arakanese chronicles, Lord Buddha, accompanied by his five hundred disciples, visited the city of Dhannyawadi (Grain blessed) in 554 B.C. King

Chandrasuriya (Sun and Moon) and all the people converted to Buddhism and became Buddhists since then. The king requested Lord Buddha to leave the image of Himself to commemorate the event before he left Arakan and Lord Buddha consented it. This was the famous *Mahamuni* (Great Sage) image, known throughout the Buddhist world and desired by kings who sought to conquer the country in order to carry away this powerful prize. The history of this image is entwined with that of Arakan. After casting the Great Image Mahamuni, Lord Buddha breathed upon it which resembled the exact likeness of the Blessed One. Of course, through the ages later, several Hindu Dynasties ruled Arakan like from 100 - 957 A. D. and the Chandra dynasty was one of them. Ref: <http://www.rakhapura.com/arakan/>

Situated on the Bay of Bengal, the ancient Arakan kingdom naturally had more ties with the Indian sub-continent than with the rest of Burma, from which it was separated by the Arakan Yoma mountain range.

History traces back (even according to the anti-Rohingya camps) the presence of the Muslims in Arakan from the 7th century and their influence grew further after the Arab traders established trade link with the East Indies in the 8th and 9th century A.D. 'During this time, Chittagong which was the lone seaport of East India, became the resting place and colony of the Arabs. We know from the accounts of the ancient Arab travelers and geologists including *Sulaiman* (living in 851 AD), *Abu Jaidul Hasan* (contemporary of *Sulaiman*), *Ibnu Khuradba* (died 912 AD), *Al-Masudi* (died 956 AD), *Ibnu Howkal* (wrote his travelogue in 976 AD), *Al-Idrisi* (born last half of 11th century) that the Arab traders became active in the area between Arakan and the eastern bank of the *Meghna* River.' Ref: *Bengali Literature in the Kings' Court of Arakan*.

Although there are many controversies as to the actual religious beliefs of many kings of the ancient Arakan, but all the historians unanimously agree that the names of many kings of the ancient Arakan before the British colonial rule, were 'Muslim' like (1) Solaiman Shah Naramaikhla (1430-1434), (2) Ali Khan Meng Khari (1434-1459), (3) Kalima Shah Ba Saw Phyu (1459-1482), (4) Mathu Shah Doulya (1482-1492), (5) Mohammed Shah Ba Saw Nyo (1492-1493), (6) Nori Shah Ran Aung (1493-1494), (7) Sheikh Modullah Shah Salingathu (1494-1501), (8) Ili Shah Meng Raza (1501-1523), (9) Ilias Shah Kasabadi (1523-1525), (10) Jalal Shah Meng Saw Oo (1525), (11) Ali Shah Thatasa (1525-1531), (12) Salimshah (1608). And all of those kings used coins with Muslim inscriptions like *Kalima 'la-ilaha-illallah'*, *'Muhammedur Rasulullah'* etc.

### **Bengali Literature in ancient Arakan Kingdom: From Rakhine Perspective**

Bengali or Bangla is an Indo-Aryan language of the eastern Indian subcontinent, which evolved from the *Magadhi Prakrit* and *Sanskrit* languages. Bengali is native to the region of eastern South Asia known as Bengal, which comprises present day Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal. There are also a significant number of Bengali speakers in the Indian states of Assam and Tripura. With nearly 230 million total speakers, Bengali is one of the most spoken languages (ranking fifth or sixth) in the world. Bengali is the primary language spoken in Bangladesh and is the second most spoken language in India. Along with Assamese, it is geographically the most eastern of the Indo-Iranian languages and the most eastern of the Indo-European languages.

Bengali is the national and official language of Bangladesh and one of the 23 official languages recognised by the Republic of India. It is the official language of the states of West Bengal and Tripura. It is also a major language in the Indian union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It is also the co-official language of Assam, which has three predominantly Sylheti-speaking districts of southern Assam: Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi. The national anthems of both India and Bangladesh were written by the Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Many dialects have evolved from Bengali language which are prevalent in much of eastern and south-eastern Bengal like Barisal, Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions of Bangladesh. *Rajbangsi*, *Kharia Thar* and *Mal Paharia* are closely related to Western Bengali dialects, but are typically classified as separate languages. Similarly, *Hajong* is considered a separate language, although it shares similarities to Northern Bengali dialects. The Rohingya language of Arakan is also a dialect of Bengali language which is closely identical with the Chittagonian dialect of Bangladesh.

However, the language of the Hindu rulers of the ancient Arakan was those which were prevalent in the then Indian sub-continent where Bengali was one of their commonly spoken languages and later the Bengali literature has flourished significantly in the ancient Arakan Kingdom by the 17th century.

On July 30, 2005, the "Arakanese Research Society of Bangladesh (ARSB)", a Rakhine organization, published in its "Arakanese Research Journal - Vol. 2." a chapter of "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya* (1600 - 1700 AD)", (Bengali Literature in the Kings' Court of Arakan) originally written By Dr Muhammad Enamul Huq (M.A., Ph. D) and Sahitya-sagar Abdul Karim Sahitya Visarad and was translated from Bengali by Maung Sein Pru, the Consulting Editor of the journal and which is now available in the anti-Rohingya website of the Rakhine organizations:

[http://www.rakhapura.com/read.asp?CatId=12&NewsId=52&Title=Arakan+Rajsabhay+Bangala+Sahitya+%3Cbr%3E\(1600+-+1700+AD\)\\*%3Cbr%3EBengali+Literature+in+the+Kings%92+Court+of+Arakan](http://www.rakhapura.com/read.asp?CatId=12&NewsId=52&Title=Arakan+Rajsabhay+Bangala+Sahitya+%3Cbr%3E(1600+-+1700+AD)*%3Cbr%3EBengali+Literature+in+the+Kings%92+Court+of+Arakan)

The original book of "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya*" was written in Bengali and it was published by Sahitya-sagar Abdul Karim Sahitya Visarad in 1935 AD from Gurudas Chattaopadhyay and Sons, 203/1/1 Cornwallis Street, Kalikata, India. The book provides a huge record of the glorious presence of the Muslims and the Bengali literature in the ancient Arakan also called as 'Roshang' and below there are some excerpts:

"The Muslim poets in the Roshang Court, which itself was dominated by Muslim influence, nurtured Bengali literature in the 17th century AD. The outcome of the Bengali literature in Roshang Court was multifaceted and long-lasting."

"The way Bangali flourished in the court of the 17th century Arakan, nothing of that sort is found in its [Bengal's] own soil. It is surprising that during the exile of Bengali language in Arakan, it was greatly appreciated by the Muslim courtiers of the Arakanese kings and the Muslim poets of East Bengal, especially those of the [greater] Chittagong Division. Later we will see the Bengali language received new form and inspiration from the Muslim poets in the Kings' Court of Arakan. To properly understand the development of the Bengali literature in the hands of foreigners of a foreign land we need to know first the Arakanese history of the 17th century and Muslim influence on it. With this aim in mind we have introduced the following short history of Arakan and the Muslim influence on it."

"We can also learn about this from the Roshang national history: when Roshang King, Maha Taing Chandra (788 - 810 AD) was ruling in the 9th century, some ship wrecked Muslim traders were washed ashore on "Ronbee" or "Ramree" Island. When they were taken to the Arakanese king, the king ordered them to live in the village (countryside) in his country. Other historians also recognised the fact that Islam and its influence developed in Arakan in the 9th and 10th century AD."

"The Arabic influence increased to such a large extent in Chittagong during mid 10th century AD that a small Muslim kingdom was established in this region, and the ruler of the kingdom was called "Sultan". Possibly the area from the east bank of the *Meghna* River to the Naf [Nâf] was under this "Sultan". We can know about the presence of this "Sultan" in the Roshang national history. In 953 AD Roshang King, Sulataing Chandra (951- 957 AD) crossed his border into Bangla (Bengal) and defeated the "Thuratan" (Arakanese corrupt form of Sultan), and as a symbol of victory setup a stone victory pillar at a place called "Chaikta-gong" and returned home at the request of the courtiers and friends. This Chaik-ta-gong was the last border of his victory, since according to Roshang national history – "*Chaik-ta-gong*" means "war should not be raised", many surmise that the modern name of Chittagong district originated from "Chaik-ta-gong".

"In this way the religion of Islam spread and the Muslim influence slowly extended from the eastern bank of the *Meghna* to Roshang Kingdom in the 8th and 9th centuries."

"The study of Bengali literature that the Muslim initiated reached perfection under the aegis of the courtiers of the Roshang kings. It is needless to say that the Kings' Court of Roshang got filled up with Muslim influence long before this. From the beginning of the 15th century AD the Kings' Court of Roshang by luck was compelled to heartily receive the Muslim influence."

"Roshang King, Thiri thu-dhamma Raja (1622 -1638 AD) was as greatly powerful as his father, Meng Kha Mounng or Husain Shah (1612 -1622 AD). He also used Muslim name as his father; unluckily that has not been deciphered. He ruled a vast area from Dhaka to Pegu. During his rule, Poet Daulat Qazi, with orders from Ashraf Khan, while living in King's Court of Roshang, started writing the incomplete epic poem, "*Satî Mainâ*. The lineage,

Dhamma [religion], religious practice, great power and justice of King Thiri thu-dhamma has been testified by Daulat Qazi as follows:

*“To the east of the river Karnafuli there is a palace,  
Roshang City by name - like the Heaven.  
There rules the glorious king of Magadha descent a follower of  
the Buddha,  
Name being Sri Sudhamma Raja, renown for his justice.  
His power is like the morning sun, famous in the world,  
Grooms the subjects like his own children.  
Reveres the Lord [Buddha] and purely religious,  
One's sins are forgiven when one sees his feet....  
Whoever extols the pious, famous and just king –  
His poverty vanishes though born poor he is.  
If by virtue of good deeds  
One can see the King's face –  
From hell (he's) delivered to heaven  
A life of success.  
Justice and peace prevail across the land  
One needs not fear another, all (are) fairly treated  
If the ants rejoice over honey-woods  
The elephant doesn't cross them fearing the King.  
Whoever hears and extols that virtue  
His poverty vanishes though born poor he be.”*

The king also had vast number of soldiers and navy. The poet writes:

*White, red, black- elephants of every hue  
The sky is covered with colourful flags.  
Millions of soldiers, and countless horses,  
Who can tell the number of [war] boats?”*

The “*Laskar Uzir*” or “War Minister” was a Muslim – Ashraf Khan by name. He [the poet] wrote his poem by the order of Ashraf Khan. He was King's trusted favourite person. The King felt relieved by entrusting all the state craft to him. The Queen also consider him to be more “worth and profoundly learned” than her own son. This shows how much “authority, influence and control” the “*Laskar Uzir*” wielded in Arakan. In fact he ran the country and was the supreme authority. No wonder, the influence and circumstances of the Muslims would flourish in such a country. Actually it was so. Countless number of Sheikhs, Syeds, Qazis, Mollahs, Alims, Fakirs, Arabians, Rumis, Moghuls, Pathans import to Arakan and Ashraf Khan took the responsibility to give accommodation in Roshang and service to them; he built mosques and dug ponds in many places. People who left their countries, people living abroad, travelers and merchants from Ashin (Achi, Ache?), Kuchin (Cochi), Maslipettan (Macilipatan) to Mecca- Medina praised his love of own nation and religion.

"*Laskar Uzir*" Ashraf Khan hailed from Chittagong. The remnants of his building at *Charia* village of *Hathazari* thana [in Chittagong district] can be seen even today. A pond in the village also carries his memories. It can be heard that there are a number of monuments attributed to him in different places of Chittagong. Amongst them a large pond at Kadalpur village of Raozan thana is still renown as "*Laskar Uzir's Pond*".

"The influence and power of the Muslims that was established in the King's Court of Roshang increased day by day without any sign of lessening. For this reason we can see that the chief poets of Roshang kingdom [when vacant] were not filled without the Muslims. The Muslims were without doubt skilled statesmanship. Or else the highest ranks in the Court would not been filled up by Muslims."

"From Alaol's poem "*Saiful Muluk*" it is known that when he ascended the Roshang throne he had not acquired the skills to run the country yet. Therefore the minor King's mother ruled as Regent by appointing Magan Thakur as the Chief Minister. Possibly Sanda-thudhamma took over the burden of government before Magan Thakur's death. After Magan Thakur, Solaiman - another Muslim- filled the position, that is, became the "Prime Minister" (chief counselor/ courtier of the highest rank) of Roshang King Sanda-thu-dhamma. The treasury and general administration of the country was entrusted to this Muslim chief Minister. During Sanda-thu-dhamma's rule the important posts of Roshang kingdom were given to the Muslims. Syed Muhammad was his "war minister" (armed force minister); Alaol got to write "*Sapta Paykar*" at his order. Another Muslim named Majlis was "*Navaraj*" [Nawa-raja - young prince?] in the King's Court of Arakan; he is known as "*Navaraj Majlis*". Alaol translated "*Sikandar Nama*" - a Persian poem into Bengali by his order". It seems that the civil and criminal courts were run by the Muslim *Qazis* [judges]. It is known that during that period a man by the name of *Saud Shah* was a *Qazi* of Roshang. {Cont: p-12}

"Syed Saud Shah, Qazi of Roshang,  
Agreed to [foster] me, finding in me a little learning..."  
(*Sikandar Nama*)

Another person, Sayed Musa, was a minister of Sanda-thu-dhamma. Alaol completed "*Saiful Muluk*" by his order.

The degree of the influence and presence of Muslims can easily be guessed in the King's Court where the Muslims prevailed. Of course, Sanda-thu-dhamma had a high esteem of the Muslims. Serious politics was behind the gruesome assassination of Shah Shuja by the King in 1660 AD. It does not prove the King's lack of love for the Muslims. Thus we see:

"People from every country, hearing the magnificence of Roshang,  
Took shelter under the King.  
Arabian, Michiri [Egyptian], Shami, Turkish, Habsi [African], Rumi  
Khorachani and Uzbek.  
Lahuri, Multani, Sindi, Kashmiri, Dakkhini [Deccanese], Hindi,  
Kamrupi [Assamese] and Bangadeshi [Bengali],  
Ahopai Khotanchari (?), Karnali, Malayabari,

*From Achi, Kuchi [Cochi] and Karnataka.  
 Countless Sheik, Soiyadjada, Moghul, Pathan warriors,  
 Rajput, Hindu of various nationals.  
 Avai [Inwa], Burmese, Siam [Thai], Tripura, Kuki to name  
 How many more should I elaborate.[?]  
 Armenian, Olandaz [Dutch], Dinemar, Engraj [English],  
 Castiman and Frangais.  
 Hipani[c], Almani, Chholdar, Nachhrani,  
 Many a races including Portuguese.”  
 (Padmavati)*

### **End of Quotation**

Notably, Daulat Qazi (1600-1638) was a medieval Bengali poet who was believed to have been born in a Qazi family in the village of Sultanpur in Rauzan, Chittagong. Failing to get any recognition at home, he left for Arakan, where he was warmly received. He wrote in Bangla though he lived in Arakan. Quazi is believed to be the first Bengali poet to write under the patronage of the Arakan court. His patron Ashraf Khan was “*Laskar Uzir*” or “War Minister” of king Shrisudharma who ruled between 1622 and 1638. Ashraf Khan asked Daulat to render the west Indian stories of *Lorchandrani* and *Mayana* into Bangla. Daulat Quazi died before he could finish his poem. It was completed years later by Alaol.

Alaol (1607?-1680?) was a medieval Bengali poet. Perhaps his most well known work is *Padmavati*, which depicts the story of the Sri Lankan princess Padmavati. He is widely believed to be one of the most talented of Bengali medieval poets. Born in Faridpur district of Bangladesh, Alaol is believed to have been kidnapped by Portuguese pirates while traveling on boat with his father. He was taken to Arakan. Alaol worked as a bodyguard for a while, but slowly his reputation as a poet spread. Magan Thakur, the prime minister of Arakan, secured him a place in the court of Arakan. His other works are: *Satimayana-Lorchandrani*, *Saptapaykar*, *Saifulmuluk Badiuzzamal*, *Sikandarnama*, *Tohfa*, *Hopto Poykor*, *Ragtalnama*, *Lorchandrani* (completion of Doulat Kazi's work), His works, apart from *Ragtalnama*, are adaptations of works in other languages.

### **The Origin of 'Rohingya' & their Language**

There are many controversies in the origin of the word 'Rohingya', but the most appropriate and logical conclusion is that it has evolved from the word 'Roshang' and 'Rooinga'. Regarding the origin of 'Roshang' (later Rohang), it was stated in the Chapter one of "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya(1600-1700 AD)*" (*Bengali Literature in the Kings' Court of Arakan*): "During the 17th century AD when Muslim in Arakan nurtured Bengali Literature, the Muslim poets of that time identified the country as “Roshang”."

Therefore, many historians including many Rakhine intellectuals are of the opinion that

“Roshang” is the ancient name of Arakan from where the word 'Rohingya' has originated. Of course, the anti-Rohingya camps allege that the word 'Rohingya' has sprang up by 1950s and it was never heard before.

However, in his article titled ' *A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire* ' published in 1799, in the fifth volume of Asiatic Researches, Dr Francis Buchanan (15 February 1762 - 15 June 1892), a Scottish physician who made significant contributions as a geographer, zoologist and botanist while living in India from 1803 to 1804 as the surgeon to the Governor General of India Lord Wellesley in Calcutta, India, recorded the identity and language of the Rohingyas (which he wrote as 'Rooinga') of the ancient Arakan as per the following:

"I shall now add three dialects, spoken in the Burma Empire, but evidently derived from the language of the *Hindu* nation. The first is that spoken by the *Mohammedans*, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves **Rooinga**, or natives of *Arakan*. The second dialect is that spoken by the *Hindus* of Arakan. I procured it from a *Brahmen* and his attendants, who had been brought to *Amarapura* by the king's eldest son, on his return from the conquest of *Arakan*. They call themselves **Rossawn**, and, for what reason I do not know, wanted to persuade me that theirs was the common language of Arakan. Both these tribes, by the real natives of Arakan, are called *Kulaw Yakain*, or stranger Arakan.

The last dialect of the *Hindustanee* which I shall mention, is that of a people called, by the Burmas, *Aykobat*, many of them are slaves at *Amarapura*. By one of them I was informed, that they had called themselves **Banga** ; that formerly they had kings of their own ; but that, in his father's time, their kingdom had been overturned by the king of *Munnypura*, who carried away a great part of the inhabitants to his residence. When that was taken last by the *Burmas*, which was about fifteen years ago, this man was one of the many captives who were brought to *Ava*.

He said also, that *Banga* was seven days' journey south-west from *Munnypura*: it must, therefore, be on the frontiers of *Bengal*, and may, perhaps, be the country called in our maps *Cashar*."

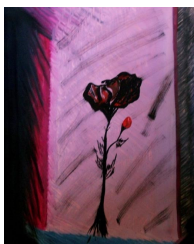
Giving a record of comparative vocabulary of three dialects of the ancient Arakan spoken by '**Rooinga**', '**Rossawn**' and '**Banga**', Dr Francis Buchanan mentioned 50 words of each tribe like: ( 1) Sun – Bel - \*Sooja - Baylee (2) Moon – Sawn – Sundsa - Satkan (3) Stars – Tara - \*Nokyoto - \* Tara (4) Earth – Kool – Murtika - \*Matee (5) Water - Pann? - \*Dsol - \*Pann? (6) Fire – Auin - \*Aagane - Zee (7) Stone – Sheel - \*Sheel - \*Heel (8) Wind – Bau - \*Pawun - \*Bo (9) Rain –Jorail - †Bistee - \*Booun (10) Man – Manush - †Moanusa - \*Manoo (11) Woman – Meealaw – Stree – Zaylan (12) Child – Gourapa - \*Balouk - Sogwo (13) Head – Mata – Mustok - Teekgo (14) Mouth – Gall – Bodon – Totohan (15) Arm – Bahara - \*Baho - Paepoung (16) Hand – Hat – Osto - Hatkan (17) Leg – Ban - †Podo - Torooa (18) Foot – Pau – Pata - Zankan (19) Beast---Zoomtroo - Sasee - sangee (20) Bird – Paik - †Pookyee - †Pakya (21) Fish – Maws - Moots? - †Mas (22) Good – Goom – Gam - Hoba

(23) Bad - Goom nay – Gumnay - Hoba nay (24) Great – Boddau – Dangor - Domorgo (25) Little – Thuddee - \*Tsooto - Hoorooogo (26) Long – Botdean – Deengol - Deengul (27) Short – Banick - \*Batee - \*Batee (28) One – Awg - \*Aik - \*Ak (29) Two – Doo - \*Doo - De (30) Three – Teen - \*Teen - †Teen (31) Four – Tchair - \*Tsar - \*Saree (32) Five – Pansoe - \*Paus - \*Pas (33) Six – Saw - \*Tso - \*Ts? (34) Seven – Sat - \*Sat - \*Hat (35) Eight – Awtoa - †Asto - \*Awt (36) Nine – Nonaw - \*No - \*No (37) Ten – Dussoa - \*Dos - \*Dos (38) Eat – Kau - \*Kawai - †K? k (39) Drink – Karin – Kawo - †Peek (40) Sleep – Layrow - †Needsara - Hooleek (41) Walk – Pawkay – Bayra - †O-teea-ootea (42) Sit – Boihow - †Boesho - †Bo (43) Stand – Tcheilayto - \*Karao - †Oot (44) Kill – Marim - \*Maro - \*Mar (45) Yes – Hoi – Oir - Oo (46) No – Etibar - \*Noay - \*Naway (47) Here – Hayray – Etay - Erang (48) There – Horay – Horay - Orung (49) Above – Ouchalo - \*Ooper - Goa (50) Below – Ayray - Hayray† - Tol. Here the words which come nearest the *Hindustanee* spoken on the Ganges, have been marked with (\*) and those which are not evidently in connection with the same but show resemblance by analogy, have been marked with (†).

Notably, except four words e.g.; *Ban*, *Thuddee*, *Tcheilayto* and *Etibar* out of the above mentioned 50 **Rooinga** words, all other 46 words are still commonly spoken by the Rohingyas of today's Arakan and the people of Chittagong alike some ones with a little change of accent, object and area. And about 80% of other words of '**Rossawn**' and '**Banga**' of the then ancient Arakan language are now in use in the Bengali language of today's Bangladesh and the West Bengal of India. Ref: SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, Vol. 1, No., 1, Spring 2003, ISSN 1479-8484

<http://web.soas.ac.uk/burma/Comparative%20Vocabulary.PDF>

All the above facts which were not written by the Rohingyas and where there is an unequivocal consensus of all the pro- and anti – Rohingya historians as well as the world historians, irrefutably prove that the Rohingyas existed in the ancient Arakan as an indigenous group with their own language and culture and they are not the British era settlers of Arakan which is now a state under the Union of Burma.#



## What is the actual population of Rohingyas?

**Dated: 2009-04-24 08:57:11**

In its Briefing Paper No. 2, 2009 dated 26 March 2009, the Brussels based Euro-Burma Office stated : '*in international circles it (Rohingya) is generally used to denote the Muslim community in the three townships of northern Arakan State – Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung – bordering Bangladesh.*'

Regarding the population of Rohingyas the EBO Briefing Paper said: 'Today, they number about 800,000 in Arakan State and are classified by the SPDC government as a foreign Bengali Muslim community. In the past, some have estimated up to 2 million Muslims in Arakan State. There are also large Rohingya refugee populations overseas. It is estimated that there are 500,000 Rohingyas living in Saudi Arabia, 200,000 in Pakistan, 200,000 in Bangladesh, 50,000 in the United Arab Emirates and 25,000 in Malaysia'.



In fact, the above statement of the EBO Briefing Paper does not present the actual population picture of the Rohingyas.

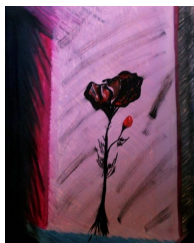
The actual population of Rohingya is estimated to be about 3.5 million out of which about two millions still live in Burma and the rest 1.5 million Rohingyas live in exile mostly as undocumented refugees. And as shown in the EBO Briefing Paper, it is not only the three townships of northern Arakan State – Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, where the Rohingyas mainly live, there are many other townships of Arakan State where there is a large Rohingya population like Sittwe (Akyab), the capital city of Arakan State, Kyawktaw, Kyawk Phyu, Paletwa etc and different other parts of Burma.

With regards to the actual population of Rohingyas in Bangladesh and Pakistan, it is, in reality, at least double of the figure shown in the statement. The population figure shown in the EBO statement is same as the statement of the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) which was issued over two decades back. So, there is every reason to believe that the figure has gone much higher over the last two decades.

In fact, the Rohingyas are a hidden population of Burma. The Burmese military regime does not recognize the existence of the Rohingyas in Burma even though the democratic government of U Nu granted local autonomy to the Rohingyas and declared establishment of the **Mayu Frontier Administration (MFA)**, a special frontier district ruled directly by the central government in the year 1961, May 30, which was abolished in 1964, on February 1, by Gen. Ne Win after he seized power from U Nu.

However, since the takeover of Gen. Ne Win in 1962, the military regime has been pursuing a systematic ethnic cleansing policy to turn Arakan into a '*Rohingya-less*' land. Several genocidal operations have been conducted against them like that of 1978 and 1991 / 92. They have been denied some of the most basic human rights — no citizenship, no freedom of movement, no marriage without permission. Since 1988, the Government has permitted only 3 marriages per year per village in the primary Rohingya townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw in northern Arakan State. Later the Government extended this edict to other townships of the Arakan.

In fact, the serious restriction on the marriage of Rohingya have been imposed as a part of the genocidal policy of the Burmese regime which is aimed to reduce the Rohingya population in Arakan and thus change the ethnic demography of the Rohingyas.#



## Rohingyas' Plight: The Cruel Fate of Rawnak

**Dated: 2009-04-07 09:10:29**

Rawnak is the daughter of the Rohingya Grand Mufti (Cleric) Maulana Ziaul Hoque. Maulana Ziaul Hoque is the Head Imam (Custodian) of the Grand Mosque of Sittwe, the capital city of Arakan State of Burma. Rawnak's Burmese name is Daw Nu. Her house address # No-18, Central Mosque Compound, Main Road, Sittwe, Burma.

Rawnak was born in 1963 in her home village: Kyawktaw Palong under Kyawktaw Township. She was living with her parents in Sittwe until she was given in marriage to one of their relatives U Ba Khin in 1984.



U Ba Khin was born in 1959 in their home village: Kyawktaw Palong under Kyawktaw Township. In 1995, he was shot dead by the Burmese navy in the Sittwe sea while he was on board his fishing boat together with some other Rohingyas. Others jumped into the water before the shooting and swam ashore later. The navy dumped his body into the water and thus perished.

However, on June 04, 2000, six Rohingyas from Kaywktaw Township arrived at the house of Maulana Ziaul Hoque, the father of Rawnak. They came to go to Rangoon. On the following day, they boarded a Rangoon-bound steamer but were arrested by the immigration police in Kyawk Phyu on their way to Rangoon. However, upon the message from the Kyawk Phyu police, the Sittwe police detained Maulana Ziaul Hoque on the charge of helping the detained 6 Rohingyas to travel to Rangoon. Then Rawnak went to police station alone and informed the police that her father did not know anything about those detained Rohingyas and that it is she who allowed them to stay at their house and then go to Rangoon.

Then police released Maulana Ziaul Hoque and arrested Rawnak on June 21, 2000 and then she was sent to Kyawk Phyu police by steamer. In the Sittwe Police station, police tortured her so inhumanly that at the time of taking her on board the steamer, people saw her limping as she can not walk while the male police was dragging her behind. Her one eye was swollen like a guava. Her lips were swollen and stains of thick blood was seen in one side of her face.

Rawnak has 4 children - three daughters and one son. The name of her daughters are Noor Hafiza, Sayed Nisa, Zebor Nisa and the name of her son is Ekramul Hoque. Her son Ekramul Hoque was 6 years old when Rawnak was arrested. However, now it is 9 years that the children of Rawnak could not see her for once as there is no scope for them to travel to Kyawk Phyu.

Rawnak is now in Kyawk Phyu jail. She was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. Her Case Nr: 21/2000 which was later changed by the Rangoon High Court as 530/B. Her Prisoner Nr: 5184-C.

The story of 6 imprisoned Rohingyas: Case Nr # 21/2000: The 6 Rohingyas for whom Rawnak was charged of helping them to travel to Rangoon were arrested on June 06, 2000 in Kyawk Phyu district. They boarded a Rangoon-bound steamer on June 05, 2000. Until June 19, 2000, they were detained and quizzed by the Special Branch where they have been tortured so inhumanly that they had to sign confessional statement as per the desire of the SB Police that they are Bangladeshi immigrants.

On June 19, 2000, they were handed over by the SB Police to the police station at Kyawk Phyu. On July 22, 2000, they were produced before the court where the Rohingyas denied of being the Bangladeshi immigrants and they claimed themselves as the Burmese citizens. Then the Kyaw Phyu police sent them back to police custody on remand. Police quizzed them for 6 months in their custody until December 31, 2000. Finally, they were forced to agree to give confessional statement and then the police produced them before the court on Dec 31, 2000. The court sentenced each of them to 20 years rigorous imprisonment including a 14-year old Mamat Hashim. Now they are all in Kyawk Phyu jail. They include Maung Aye Sirajuddin with Prisoner Nr: 5180/C, Maung Aye Maung Yousuf with Prisoner Nr: 5158/C and Maung Ba Sein Nabi Awal with Prisoner Nr: 5177/C.

However, Mamat Hashim was there with them as he was trying to go to his father who some how reached Rangoon earlier. The testimonial issued by the school for Mamat Hashim and which was submitted to the court certified his 14-years of age at the time of prosecution. The school testimonial mentioned his date of birth as Oct 15, 1985. The Kyawk Phyu High Court sentenced Mamat Hashim for total 20 years (6 years under Section Nr: 420/109, 7 years under Section Nr: 468/109 and 7 years under Section Nr: 473/109).

Mamat Hashim is now in Kyawk Phyu jail. He is now 23 years old. He still could not see his father and on the other hand, his mother died on December 2007 in their home village Nahirong under Kyawktaw Township, after being lost her mental balance for several years before her death. Mamat Hashim still does not know that his mother died.

However, Rawnak has lost her husband. Her children have lost the love and affection of their mother. She has lost everything simply because of being a Rohingya, a community which the Burmese military regime does not recognize as the citizens of Burma. They treat the Rohingyas as Bengali immigrants in Arakan where the Rohingyas have been living centuries after centuries. Rawnak is now at the brink of death. If the international community can find out some way to secure release of Rawnak, she can come back to life and to her children.#

## **The Case of Rohingya Undocumented Refugees in Bangladesh**

**Dated: 2008-01-23 09:52:07**

The Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh is a decades-long pending issue. According to the official record, there are some 26,000 Rohingya refugees in two official camps in Cox's Bazar, a southern district of Bangladesh bordering Burma. The government of Bangladesh manages these camps with assistance from UN refugee agency, UNHCR. These refugees are the remainder of some 258,000 Rohingyas who left Burma to escape the genocidal operation led by the Burmese military rulers against the Rohingyas in 1991- 92.

On the other hand, some estimates suggest that there are over 400,000 Rohingyas who are living in Bangladesh as undocumented refugees and there are about 300,000 Rohingyas who are living in different countries of the world with Bangladesh passport which they have somehow managed hiding their actual identity as Rohingya through the loopholes of flexible regulations. These refugees are among those who crossed to Bangladesh over the past to escape the systematic genocidal operations and gross human rights violations in their ancestral motherland Arakan which is now a state under the Union of Burma.

In fact, the Rohingya community of Arakan is one of the most unfortunate and down-trodden ethnic minority groups of the world. The Burmese government does not recognize them as its citizens branding them as Bangladeshis. They have been constantly subjected to gross human rights violation decades after decades by the Burmese military rulers who have turned the country into a secret state of terror since 1962.

The Rohingya community constitutes some 3.5 million people both at home and abroad and out of it, about 1.5 million have been uprooted from their motherland and those displaced Rohingyas have been leading a gypsy life in different countries of the world mostly in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Middle East countries etc.

In fact, the story of the large scale persecution of the Rohingyas begins with the beginning of the 20th century and during the Pogrom of 1942 which is notoriously known as "*Biyallisher Kharakhari*" over 2 hundred thousand Rohingya men, women and children have been massacred. During that Pogrom, the Rohingyas of 22 villages known as *Baishfajja* in Mrohaung Township which was the capital city of ancient Arakan Kingdom and also the Rohingyas of 14 villages known as *Chaiddafajja* of Kyawktaw Township, have been purely massacred without leaving a single Rohingya alive in those villages. During that time, tens of thousands of Rohingyas crossed to neighboring countries like Bangladesh. And particularly since Gen. Ne Win's seize of power in 1962, the exodus of Rohingyas from Arakan has turned out to be a regular phenomenon in order to escape the systematic genocidal, ethnic cleansing and drive out operations led against the Rohingyas by the Burmese military rulers.

And during the anti-Rohingya genocidal operation known as Dragon King Operation of 1978 over three hundred thousand Rohingyas took refuge in neighboring Bangladesh and later about 180,000 Rohingyas have returned to Arakan following the intervention of the international community to force the Burmese military rulers to take back its citizens. But due to the lack of an all-out guarantee of their security in Arakan, the rest portion of the refugees refused to return home and later, many of them got mixed with the local people of Bangladesh and started leading a gypsy life here and there as undocumented refugees and many of them crossed to different countries like India, Pakistan and different Middle East countries etc.

However, the Rohingya undocumented refugees now living in Bangladesh are a group of people who never exist officially. Being uprooted from their original hearths and homes in their ancestral land Arakan, most of them have been leading a miserable life without having any regular source of income to feed themselves. Most of them have been living years after years in some huts made of filthy plastic and bamboo cane, where parents and children live huddling together like packs of rats in a sewer. And due to the lack of any recognized status as refugees, there is no scope for them to receive any financial or food aid or medicine from any international agency. Resultantly, forest is the easiest source for their survival. They chop down the trees and sell them as log and firewood which is causing a serious problem for the environment of the country.

In fact, Bangladesh is a small country of only 147,570 square km with an overwhelming population of 134.6 million people out of which 70 million people live below the poverty level and out of them 45 million people live on below a dollar a day. Despite these so many limitations and limited resources, Bangladesh has given shelter to tens of thousands of Rohingya undocumented refugees over the past on the humanitarian ground. But it is quite impossible for the people of Bangladesh to shoulder the burden of so many refugees for an indefinite period.

In fact, the people of Bangladesh are very sympathetic to the never ending story of plight of Rohingyas and the sufferings of Rohingyas remind the people of Bangladesh of their own plight during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 when millions of people of Bangladesh were compelled to take refuge in neighboring India to escape the genocide.

However, the Rohingya refugee issue is a case of serious concern for Bangladesh. In order to get rid of the Rohingya refugee problem, the government has already started to tighten its measures to stop the influx of the Rohingya refugees. And one of the major problems which the Rohingya undocumented refugees have been facing over the last one year is with passport. Since the Rohingyas are not recognized as citizens of Burma, so there is no way for them to get any passport of Burma.

Since the long past, the Rohingya undocumented refugees have been continuing to use Bangladesh passport to travel abroad for the interest of their easy survival as there was no problem for them to get a passport through many flexible ways. But since the last one year, there is no scope for Rohingyas to get any passport due to strict process of scrutiny or verification as to whether an applicant is in fact a bona fide citizen of Bangladesh. Now no passport is issued until

the passport office gets a concrete verification report of the police to the fact that an applicant is in fact a citizen of the country. And also the police department is maintaining so strict procedure to verify an applicant that now they never submit any report to the passport office without going directly to the spot of the address as mentioned in the application form and then verify it minutely.

Besides, the ongoing process of exclusion of Rohingyas from the voter enlistment program of the Election Commission, has caused a question of life and death for tens of thousands of Rohingya undocumented refugees. After the finalization of the ongoing process of voter enlistment within the Year 2008, the government will provide ID Card to all its citizens. And the use of this ID Card will be mandatory for access to services and facilities in almost all walks of life like getting a new passport or driving license or their renewal, taxpayer identification number (TIN), business identification number, applying for jobs, opening bank account, getting bank loan, drawing government allowances, for trade license, marriage registration, sale and purchase of land and properties, purchase of vehicles, gas, electricity, water and telephone connection and government facilities like subsidy and assistance. In such a situation, the survival of these Rohingyas without any recognized status will be quite impossible and it will cause a big human tragedy if no specific step is taken in advance to address their problem.

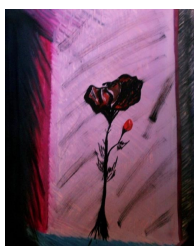
In fact, such a situation has caused a serious problem for the survival of the Rohingya undocumented refugees. And more importantly, if the government refuses through whatever means to renew the passports of the Rohingyas who are living in different countries of the world with Bangladesh passport or to reissue their passports if it is lost, then it will cause a big Human Tragedy as thousands of Rohingya immigrants who have been living in different countries of the world, will become illegal immigrants abroad facing the risk of loss of jobs, jail or deportation and many of them will become stranded there and they will not be able to reunite with their families - wife, children, fathers, mothers ,brothers, sisters and other near and dear ones, and many of them will not even be able to see for the last time their dying mothers or any other near and dear ones at their death bed. And more importantly, in that condition of becoming an illegal immigrant for example in the Middle East with the loss of passport, if any Rohingya dies whose family is in Bangladesh, the family of the deceased Rohingya will not be able to get back even his dead body and see him for the last time.

It may be mentioned here that giving citizenship to Rohingyas in Bangladesh or making any other arrangement for their permanent resettlement in Bangladesh is not a solution to their problem.. Any such move will rather aggravate their problem further. Such move will encourage the Burmese military rulers to launch more exterminatory operations against the Rohingyas in order to push the rest of Rohingyas from Arakan to Bangladesh and turn Arakan into a purely "Rohingya-less" land, because the Burmese military rulers have snatched away the citizenship right of Rohingyas on a false allegation that the Rohingyas are the British Era immigrants of the then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and as such, this type of move will indirectly justify the allegation of the Burmese rulers. On the other hand, the burden of so many refugees will cause a tremendous problem to the poverty stricken people of Bangladesh.

So, the best option towards the solution to their problem is to let them live in Bangladesh until a democratic government comes to power in Burma and to recognize them as refugees for their easy survival and to provide them with Travel Document to facilitate them to travel abroad for their livelihood.

It may be mentioned here that at present there is no effective tool in Bangladesh for the protection of refugees and identification of illegal immigrants and there is no institutional mechanism for refugee status determination (RSD) by the government. Bangladesh is not a party to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951, and its Protocol of 1967. It also does not have any national legislation to deal with asylum or refugee issues. Though Article 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal protection of law for "every other person" staying in the country for the time being, however, there is a lack of judicial interpretation and common understanding of the clause.

But Bangladesh has been a party to major international human rights instruments. It has also been a member of the UNHCR's Executive Committee since 1995. So, the state is already under obligation to extend protection to asylum seekers and refugees in the country. So, as a part of their protection, the government should take steps to recognize them as refugees and to raise the issue in the international forum with a view to find out a durable solution to their problem.#



## Farewell to Motherland

Dated: 2007-07-27 09:42:11

It was 1978. I was a child of eight years of age. The military operation against the Rohingyas "**Dragon King**" was going on. Rohingyas were fleeing from different parts of **Arakan** to **Bangladesh** to escape the military crackdown.

The name of my village is *Ombadi Para* (Rwa) and the name of our *Ooksoo* ( Union ) is *Senthaung* under *Kyawktaw Mrooney* (Township) in Arakan State of Burma. Everyday, the news of military tortures, arson or rape were spreading from area to area. People also started running from different villages of our *Ooksoo*. My father also decided to flee to Bangladesh. My father was the *Rwasugri* (Headman) of our village and was respected by all in our *Ooksoo*. As soon as the news of my father's decision to leave the country spread, people came from all the villages of the *Ooksoo* to request him not to leave them helpless at the hands of the military brutes. Finally, my father could not turn down the requests of the hundreds of helpless human beings and dropped the idea of leaving the country. But he decided to send me with my aunt and other relatives to Bangladesh to save at least my life.



Immediately, my aunt and all our other relatives who have decided to leave the country were getting preparation with whatever means they could have, but maintained utmost secrecy, lest the army would know, which would bring disasters for all or raze the whole village to the ground.

At last the long awaited moment came to bid farewell to our beloved homes and homesteads – where we were born, our village – where we were brought up, our nearby river - where we used to sport with our little boats, our cattle – that we used to graze in our meadow "*Diyakul*", the trees of mangoes and other fruits that we planted with utmost care

and affection. Time came for me to get separated from my friends and my near and dear ones and most pathetically from my parents.

That day in the evening, my father took me before the sunset to our village graveyard "*Foirtua*" to offer final prayer beside the grave of my grandfather and other deceased relatives and have a last visit. My father was weeping terribly, I was weeping too. Later, bidding them final farewell we returned home.

At about 10 pm., all the families of our migrating caravan began to pour in our house wherefrom we would start our journey for the uncertain destination altogether.

Hundreds of men, women and children gathered around. The light was put off. Only the feeble light of a bonfire was visible around. The eyes of everyone were full of tears. Someone was crying in pressed voice and someone weeping in silence. It was a heart-rending scene that people can hardly witness.

The last moment of bidding farewell came. The "*Majhee*" (boatman) came to inform us of the arrival of the boats with which we would make the voyage. My mother was almost senseless in grief. My father and my grandmothers were crying terribly. At last, my father took up my hands and poured them into the hands of my aunt and tried to utter something, but could not.

Finally, we were led to the "*Ghaat*" (bank) of the river where the boats were waiting to carry us. A caravan of hundreds of men, women and children were walking to the river crying .....weeping ..... sobbing. At last we reached the bank and got onto the boats. The crowd who came to see us off was still standing still on the bank and when our boats departed from the bank we raised our hands to the Almighty saying, "Dear Almighty! We are leaving many of our helpless near and dear ones at Your hand. You please save them from the military tyrants with Your heavenly protection." Perhaps, those who were left behind also raised their hands to the sky and said, "Dear Omnipotent! Protect them from all odds and obstacles and help them reach their destination safe and secure."

After arriving at Apawa, we started journey along the dreadful *Apawa mountain pass* which was, in fact, a start of another ordeal. It was so heart-rending and so harrowing that people can never imagine in a free world. While trekking that long arduous *Apawa mountain pass* I have seen many old and disabled men and women falling down dying while climbing the rugged hazardous mountain and most painful was the scene of the groaning pregnant women while giving birth to their baby in that dense forest. And more painful was the groans of some Rohingya women wailing terribly (as I could understand later on) after being persecuted by the forces *en bloc* in the army camp. My heart terribly shudders still to visualize those harrowing events.#



## **ROHINGYAS IN THE WORLD MEDIA**

Sydney Morning Herald: April 16, 2009

### **Rohingya not our problem, Burma tells Bali meeting**

A LASTING solution to the plight of Burma's Rohingya minority remains elusive after Burma yesterday continued to deny they were its citizens or acknowledge they were persecuted. [continue](#)

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/rohingya-not-our-problem-burma-tells-bali-meeting-20090416-a7md.html>

RFA: April 16, 2009

### **Asia's New Boat People**

BANGKOK—Burma's Muslim Rohingya minority are routinely persecuted by powerful local officials in the northern state of Rakhine, the Rohingya and their advocates say. [continue](#)

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/burma/rohingya-04162009074518.html>

Media Monitors Network: April 15, 2009

### **North Arakan: an open prison for the Rohingya in Burma**

"Many minorities, including the Rohingya of Burma, are persecuted by being rendered stateless."

Hundreds of thousands have fled to Bangladesh and further afield to escape oppression or in order to survive. There were mass exoduses to Bangladesh in 1978 and again in 1991-92. Each time, international pressure persuaded Burma to accept them back and repatriation followed, often under coercion. But the outflow continues. [continue](#)  
<http://usa.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/61505>

Bangkok Post: April 15, 2009

### **RI expects Myanmar to speak up on Rohingya issue at Bali meeting**

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said Wednesday that Indonesia expected Myanmar delegates to speak up about the Rohingya refugee problem to help settle people smuggling issues during the Bali meeting in Nusa Dua, Bali. [continue](#)  
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/04/15/ri-expects-myanmar-speak-rohingya-issue-bali-meeting.html>

Xinhua: April 14, 2009

### **Indonesia hosts Asia-Pacific meeting on Rohingya issue**

JAKARTA, April 14 (Xinhua) -- Indonesia is scheduled to host an Asia Pacific ministerial meeting that will discuss Rohingnya boat people who are seeking refugee status, The Jakarta Post reported Tuesday. [continue](#)

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/14/content\\_11183650.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/14/content_11183650.htm)

TODAY: March 25, 2009

### **Singapore would deal with Rohingya refugees 'humanely'**

THE news of how hundreds of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar had drowned, after being allegedly pushed out to sea by a neighbour's military, provoked outrage in some quarters. [continue](#)

<http://www.todayonline.com/Errors/404.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/articles.aspx>

Malaysian Insider: March 20, 2009

### **A regional solution for Rohingyas**

MARCH 20 — In January this year, shocking news emerged of the mistreatment by Thai security forces of over a thousand 'boat people' travelling from Bangladesh and Burma to Thailand and Malaysia. Most of them were ethnic Rohingyas from Arakan State in Burma. [continue...](#)

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/opinion/alice-nah/20814-a-regional-solution-for-rohingyas>

Irrawaddy: March 13, 2009

### **UN to Increase Focus on Burma's Muslim Migrants**

RANGOON — The UN refugee agency said it will increase its focus on areas of Burma from which Muslim migrants have recently fled.

The announcement on Thursday came after High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres' visit to the country, which began Saturday. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15293](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15293)

Bangkok Post: March 11, 2009

### **Burma's Rohingyas in flight and the solutions to their plight [Opinion]**

Much ink has been spilt over the plight of Rohingyas who have sought shelter in the Southeast Asian region in recent months, even though the situation is hardly new. Opinions range from the nationalistic to internationalistic - varying from defensive

claims of national security immersed in an attitude of denial, to international law-based advocacy of their rights inviting a more open response. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/13122/burma-rohingyas-in-flight-and-the-solutions-to-their-plight>

TIME: March 10, 2009

### **Visiting the Rohingya, Burma's Hidden Population**

'Sorry,' I was told, 'but there are no Rohingya here.' I was mystified. From everything that I had heard about this persecuted Muslim minority, the Rohingya come from western Burma's isolated Arakan State. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, who speak a dialect similar to that of Bengalis from neighboring Bangladesh, have fled the brutality of Burma's military regime by escaping their Buddhist-majority homeland for lives as illegal immigrants. [continue...](#)

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1883976,00.html>

RFA: March 10, 2009

### **Rohingyas Get U.N. Focus**

BANGKOK—The chief of the United Nations' refugee agency has visited Burma's northern Rakhine state, home to the Muslim Rohingya minority, a spokeswoman said.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Antonio Guterres's traveled Tuesday to Sittwe, capital of Rakhine state, which borders Bangladesh and is home to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya. [continue...](#)

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/burma/unonrohingya-03102009165406.html>

The Washington Times: March 9, 2009

### **Burma's majority persecutes Christians and Muslims alike Heidi Kingstone**

The Rohingyas may be among the most miserable refugee populations on Earth, relief workers say. Every so often the tragedy of these outcasts from militarily ruled Burma pushes itself to the forefront of international consciousness. [continue...](#)

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/09/yes-buddhists-can-be-bad/>

Bangkok Post: March 08, 2009

### **Burma is a continuing thorn in the side of Asean countries**

At last week's summit of southeast Asia's leaders, Burma constantly dogged the group's discussions. Every press conference was dominated by questions about the ethnic minority Rohingya, Burma's human rights record and the future of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/investigation/13003/asean-s-public-support-private-pressure-position-on-burma>

Irrawaddy: March 05, 2009

### **Thailand Should Not Repatriate Rohingyas: US Ambassador**

The United States Ambassador to Thailand has urged the Thai government to not forcibly repatriate Rohingya boat people to Burma without guarantees of their safety. The Rohingyas are a Muslim ethnic minority who live in Burma. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15245](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15245)

The Phillipine Star: March 03, 2009

### **ASEAN urged to shelter Muslim boat people**

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) - A Malaysian rights group urged Southeast Asian nations today to give temporary shelter to Myanmar's Muslim boat people landing on their shores until conditions are safe for them to return home. Suaram, one of Malaysia's most vocal human rights advocates, expressed deep concern over Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's call last week to turn back the Rohingya boat people...[continue...](#)

<http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=445448&publicationSubCategoryId=200>

BBC: Feb 28, 2009

### **Burma offers Rohingya return deal**

The Burmese government has said it will take back ethnic Rohingyas who have fled to neighbouring countries.

But it will only do so if they identify themselves as Bengalis, as it refuses to recognise the Rohingyas as one of its official minorities. [continue...](#)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7916254.stm>

SCMP: Feb 28, 2009

### **Plight of Rohingya boatpeople is on sidelines of summit**

It could be a case of beauty and the beasts or, if you prefer, the sublime to the ridiculous.

Three weeks ago it was Hollywood sex bomb Angelina Jolie leading the charge to raise international awareness of the plight of the Rohingya boatpeople in her role as a UN goodwill ambassador. This weekend it is the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, who today stage their annual summit in Hua Hin on the Gulf of Thailand. [continue...](#)

<http://www.rohingyaboatpeople.com/scmp28Feb09news.html>

The Nation: Feb 27, 2009

### **'Put human rights, Burma at top of Asean Summit agenda'**

Human rights and tackling Burma's abuses should be at the top the agenda at the Asean Summit beginning today in Chaam, Londonbased Amnesty International and New Yorkbased Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in statements released yesterday. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30096734&keyword=rohingya>

The Nation: Feb 26, 2009

### **Human rights should dominate ASEAN agenda: AI**

London-based Amnesty International (AI) called on ASEAN member states on Thursday to move human rights to the top of the agenda of the ASEAN summit if they are to demonstrate their commitment to the ASEAN Charter. [continue...](#)

[http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/02/26/regional/regional\\_30096672.php](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/02/26/regional/regional_30096672.php)

Bangkok Post: Feb 26, 2009

### **SI looks for help to halt Rohingya influx**

The Department of Special Investigation is seeking cooperation from other agencies to combat human trafficking and the smuggling of Rohingya migrants into the country. [continue...](#)

[http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/02/26/regional/regional\\_30096672.php](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/02/26/regional/regional_30096672.php)

CNN: Feb 25, 2009

### **A Forgotten People**

They are one of the world's most persecuted people. According to the United Nations, the Rohingya have been oppressed for centuries, living in one of the poorest and most remote regions of Myanmar or Burma. They have been fighting an endless battle to be recognized as a distinct ethnic group and even struggling to gain basic citizenship for decades, despite living there for centuries. [continue...](#)

<http://www.cnn.com/CNNI/Programs/untoldstories/blog/>

Straits Times: Feb 22, 2009

### **ROHINGHYA MIGRANT ABUSE: Abhisit calls for evidence**

JAKARTA - THAI Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva called on Saturday on the international media to provide evidence to back up allegations the Thai military abused Myanmar migrants.

Thailand has faced criticism over claims that its security forces abused migrants from

the Rohingya Muslim minority, hundreds of whom have been rescued in Indian and Indonesian waters in recent months. [continue...](#)

[http://www.straitstimes.com/print/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory\\_341234.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/print/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory_341234.html)

Bangkok Post: Feb 22, 2009

### **Rohingya: A regional problem**

"The Rohingya issue is a very complicated challenge to the entire region of Southeast Asia," Mr Surin told Spectrum in an exclusive interview. "Asean happens to be a foremost regional organisation aspiring to evolve into a community of caring societies, so it has to be an issue of concern to Asean. " [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/investigation/136770/rohingya-a-regional-problem>

Irrawaddy: March 23, 2009

### **Thailand Requests Burmese Help in Screening Rohingyas**

Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya asked the Burmese government on Sunday to help Thailand screen Rohingya migrants who have entered his country illegally. [continue](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15349](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15349)

The Nation: March 22, 2009

### **Thai FM makes official visit to Burma**

Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya left Sunday for an official two-day visit to Burma that is expected to touch on the controversial issue of the two countries' joint efforts to solve the ethnic minority Rohingya problem. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30098523&keyword=rohingya>

Mizzima: March 13, 2009

### **UNHCR to expand activities in Burma**

New Delhi (Mizzima) – The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee [UNHCR] said it has received 'positive' and 'encouraging signal' from the government of Burma to expand its activities in the country's northern Arakan state where Rohingya minorities reside. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15309](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15309)

The Nation: March 11, 2009

### **How far will the govt really go to protect migrant workers? [Opinion]**

" I have to apologise for meeting all of you in this condition, " said Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya. His audience was a group of 22 out of 78 Rohingya people currently detained at the

Immigration centre in this coastal town on the Andaman Sea. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30097605&keyword=Rohingya>

Irrawaddy: March 09, 2009

### **UNHCR Discusses Rohingya Issue with Burmese Regime**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Antonio Guterres, discussed the plight of Rohingya refugees on Monday with Burmese government officials in Naypyidaw. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15267](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15267)

Bangkok Post: March 07, 2009

### **Pakistan, Bangladesh immigrants under DSI scrutiny**

The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) is expanding its inquiry into the Rohingya boat people to other illegal immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Middle East for fear they could be involved in terrorism and other crimes that undermine national security. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/12898/pakistan-bangladesh-immigrants-under-dsi-scrutiny>

Bangkok Post: March 07, 2009

### **Guideline to tackle Rohingya problem**

Thailand and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have agreed to jointly introduce a handbook for screening Bengalis from the Rohingya boat people. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/137169/guideline-to-tackle-rohingya-problem>

Bangkok Post: March 06, 2009

### **Rohingya inquiry gets new chief**

The head of the Immigration Bureau, Chatchawan Suksomchit, has been assigned to supervise the handling of all cases relating to Rohingya migrants, Department of Special Investigation (DSI) director-general Thawee Sodsong said on Friday. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/137128/immigration-chief-to-head-rohingya-probes>

The Nation: March 05, 2009

**Asean wrestles with its demons seeking human rights balance**

If we had not fallen for the government's propaganda over the success of the 14th Asean Summit, we would have seen that in reality the group yet faces a lot of work in building up a 'credible' human rights body. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30097195&keyword=Rohingya>

Irrawaddy: March 04, 2009

**Burma Must Treat Rohingyas Better: Malaysia FM**

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia— Military-ruled Burma must assure its neighbors that the thousands of Muslim boatpeople who have fled the country will not be persecuted if they're returned home, Malaysia's foreign minister said on Wednesday. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15238](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15238)

CNN: March 03, 2009

**Thailand: Myanmar to allow refugees**

Myanmar will allow Rohingya refugees back into the country if they can prove that they are Bengali, Thailand's foreign ministry said. [continue...](#)

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/03/03/myanmar.refugees/index.html?iref=newssearch>

IRIN: March 02, 2009

**ASIA: Regional approach to Rohingya boat people**

HUA HIN, 2 March 2009 (IRIN) - Southeast Asian leaders have agreed to use the regional mechanism, known as the "Bali process", to try to solve the problem of the minority Muslim Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar. [continue...](#)

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83232>

The Nation: Feb 28, 2009

**Singing a requiem for the Rohingya boat people**

THIRTY YEARS AGO, I wrote the article that is partly reprinted below. It was published in The Nation on June 27, 1979, against the backdrop of the Vietnamese boat people. Things have not changed much since then. Today's inhumanity still rears its ugly head while our leaders cling to the excuses of "national interest" or "security concerns" to justify the drowning of the Rohingya boat people, instead of taking a moral stand. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30096850&keyword=rohingya>

IPS: Feb 28, 2009

### **'Bali Process' May Address Rohingya Crisis**

CHA-AM, Thailand, Feb 28 (IPS) - South-east Asian governments are examining the possibility of using a seven-year-old regional mechanism, known as the "Bali Process," to find an answer to minority Muslim Rohingyas fleeing ethnic cleansing in military-ruled Burma. [continue...](#)

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=45926>

Bangkok Post: Feb 27, 2009

### **Rohingya 'a regional problem'**

Burma is ready to take back the Rohingya migrants if they can prove they are of Bengali descent, which is a recognised ethnic minority there, Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said Friday. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asian/136936/rohingya-a-regional-problem>

Al-Jazeera: Feb 27, 2009

### **Asean under pressure over rights**

South-East Asian leaders are facing pressure to take firm action on human rights and halt cases of abuse against migrants and refugees, as they gather for a regional summit in Thailand. [continue...](#)

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2009/02/200922691514606292.html>

SCMP: Feb 24, 2009

### **UN refugee chief to quiz Thailand over Rohingya**

ANBERRA - Antonio Guterres, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, said he would travel to Bangkok next month to discuss international concerns about Thailand's treatment of Rohingya migrants. [continue...](#)

<http://www.rohingyaboatpeople.com/scmp24Feb09news.html>

SCMP: Feb 22, 2009

### **'Your son is alive': rare joy for Rohingya**

Last month, the Sunday Morning Post told the story of Akhtar Hossain, a 20-year-old Rohingya languishing in a hospital in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. More than 300 of his shipmates perished on a nightmare voyage after being expelled from Thailand in a powerless barge. The Post tracked down Akhtar's family to a remote village in Bangladesh, where journalist Shaikh Azizur Rahman broke the news to them that their son was alive. [continue...](#)

<http://www.rohingyaboatpeople.com/scmp22Feb09news.html>

New York Times: April 16, 2009

**Boat People From Myanmar Face an Uncertain Future in Indonesia Camps**

IDI RAYEUK, INDONESIA — The only solace for the almost 200 men living in a squalid refugee camp here is the freedom they now have to pray. [continue...](#)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/world/asia/17indo.html?\\_r=2&ref=asia](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/world/asia/17indo.html?_r=2&ref=asia)

Phuketwan: April 16, 2009

**Thailand's UN Pledge: No More Boat People Deaths**

THAILAND has reportedly undertaken never again to tow Rohingya boat people out to sea and abandon them, a brutal policy that led to the deaths of hundreds.

The promise has been made to the United Nations, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said yesterday at an international conference on people smuggling. [continue...](#)

<http://phuketwan.com/tourism/thailand-promises-boat-people-deaths-10996/>

Irrawaddy: April 16, 2009

**Rohingya Issue Remains Unresolved**

The issue of Rohingya boatpeople is still unsettled following the completion of a two-day regional conference on illegal migration issues held in Bali, Indonesia, as Burmese officials continue to reject the Rohingya as their citizens, according to experts who attended the meeting. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15485](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15485)

ALIRAN: April 15, 2009

**Asean has failed to save Rohingyas**

Asean member states have failed to acknowledge the root cause of Rohingya rights violations, namely the systemic discrimination faced by the Rohingya inside Myanmar. As long as this systemic persecution is not sufficiently addressed through viable policy initiatives by Asean states, the number of asylum seekers will continue to escalate, says Caram Asia. [continue...](#)

[http://www.aliran.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=895:asean-has-failed-to-save-rohingyas&catid=76:2009&Itemid=40](http://www.aliran.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=895:asean-has-failed-to-save-rohingyas&catid=76:2009&Itemid=40)

Brisbane Times (Aussie): April 15, 2009

**Australia vows more aid for Rohingya**

Australia pledged more help for Burma's persecuted Rohingya people on Wednesday as Foreign Minister Stephen Smith pressed for improved treatment of the Muslim minority. [continue...](#)

<http://news.brisbanetimes.com.au/breaking-news-world/australia-vows-more-aid-for-rohingya-20090415-a74n.html>

The New Nation (BD): April 3, 2009

**Asean responsibility towards refugees**

The Rohingya, who live in the northern part of Arakan state in Myanmar, adjacent to Bangladesh, are a Muslim minority. They are amongst those persecuted by the Myanmar military government. Due to persecution, they have fled to Thailand and Malaysia and live as illegal refugees in miserable conditions in refugee camps. [continue...](#)

<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2009/04/03/news0820.htm>

HIMAL: April 2009

**Rohingya, not Bengali (Burma)**

Yet again, the situation surrounding the ethnic Rohingya community of Burma has burgeoned from a national disgrace to a regional shame. Despite what had appeared to be a coincidence of timing and opportunity to finally allow for a concerted effort on this long-festered problem, it now appears as though the Burmese generals, backed by inertia in the capitals of Southeast Asia, will preclude any movement on the status of this beleaguered community. [continue...](#)

[http://www.himalmag.com/Rohingya-not-Bengali-\(Burma\)\\_nw2874.html](http://www.himalmag.com/Rohingya-not-Bengali-(Burma)_nw2874.html)

Bangkok Post: March 23, 2009

**Kasit asks Burma for cooperation on Rohingya**

RANGOON : Thailand has called on the Burmese government to send its embassy staff to help screen those who could be identified as Bengali people in Thailand in an attempt to resolve the Rohingya refugee problem. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/13833/kasit-asks-burma-for-cooperation-on-rohingya>

Irrawaddy: March 20, 2009

**Junta Allows UN to Continue Aid to Rohingya**

BANGKOK — For now, the United Nations' refugee agency has been given breathing room to operate in a western corner of military-ruled Burma, where humanitarian programs offer some comfort to the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15336](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15336)

Bangkok Post: March 13, 2009

### **UN to boost focus on Rohingya**

The UN has agreed with Burma to extend its activities in a region from which hundreds of Muslim people recently fled in boats, the world body's refugee chief said after a visit to the military-ruled nation. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/137396/un-to-boost-focus-on-rohingya>

MIZZIMA: March 11, 2009

### **Rohingya issue to top Thai-Burmese Foreign ministers' meet**

New Delhi (Mizzima) – Thailand's Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya will discuss the issue of Rohingya boatpeople during his visit to Burma that will begin on March 23, a Thai official said. [continue...](#)

<http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/1826-rohingya-issue-to-top-thai-burmese-foreign-ministers-meet.html>

National Post: March 10, 2009

### **The worst refugee crisis in the world**

Every so often the tragic human situation of the Rohingyas pushes itself to the forefront of international consciousness. Lately it has been as a result of the Thai authorities forcing hundreds of desperate men out to sea in open boats and leaving them to die. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1371647>

Bangkok Post: March 09, 2009

### **Rohingya on Kasit's Burma trip agenda**

RANONG : The Rohingya boat people will be on the agenda for talks when Foreign Affairs Minister Kasit Piromya visits Burma on March 23.

Also scheduled for discussion are the regulation and registration of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand and Thai imports of timber from Burma. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/13014/rohingya-on-kasit-burma-trip-agenda>

Bangkok Post: March 08, 2009

### **Minister, UN agree Rohingya proposal**

Thailand and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have agreed to jointly introduce a handbook for screening Bengalis from the Rohingya boat people. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/12950/minister-un-agree-rohingya-proposal>

Irrawaddy: March 06, 2009

### **UNHCHR Calls for Investigation on Mistreatment of Rohingya**

The United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, on Thursday called for an investigation into alleged mistreatment of Rohingya boatpeople and urged Burma's neighboring countries to treat them according to international standards. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15238](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15238)

Straits Times: March 02, 2009

### **Asean must address Rohingya**

HUA HIN - SINGAPORE Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for the first time addressed the issue of stateless Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar yesterday, warning that Asean must address it seriously or risk losing credibility. [continue...](#)

[http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory\\_344838.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory_344838.html)

Bangkok Post: Feb 28, 2009

### **Burma: We'll take Bengalis, not Rohingya**

PHETCHABURI : Burma yesterday only agreed to take back boat people if they could be identified as coming from its Bengali ethnic minority and are not Rohingya. [continue...](#)

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/12464/burma-we-ll-take-bengalis-not-rohingya>

The Nation: Feb 28, 2009

### **"We'll take any ethnic bengalis born in Burma" : Junta**

Cha-am - Burma has agreed to take back the Rohingya Muslim boat people if they are identified as ethnic Bengalis born in Burma, Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said yesterday. [continue...](#)

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30096828&keyword=rohingya>

MIZZIMA: Feb 28, 2009

### **Activists raise Burma issues with ASEAN leaders**

New Delhi (Mizzima) - Activists representing civil society organizations in Southeast Asian countries raised the Burma issue including freedom for Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in the forum of ASEAN leaders on Saturday. [continue...](#)

<http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/1779-activists-raise-burma-issues-with-asean-leaders.html>

Al-Jazeera: Feb 27, 2009

**101 East: Obsolete ASEAN**

Migrants from Myanmar have been arriving in Indonesia dehydrated and close to death. They say that they originally landed in Thailand but the Thai armed forces towed them back out to sea in boats without engines and with little food or water. [continue...](#)

<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/101east/2009/02/200921111151636639.html>

Irrawaddy: Feb 27, 2009

**Burma Insists Rohingyas are 'Bengalis'**

CHA-AM, Thailand — Burma is insisting at the Association of Southeast Nations (Asean) summit in southern Thailand that the boatpeople now fleeing Arakan State are not Rohingyas but Bengalis. [continue...](#)

[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=15209](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15209)

Straits Times: Feb 26, 2009

**Myanmar's abuses pressed on**

CHA-AM, Thailand - INTERNATIONAL human rights groups urged leaders of South-east Asia gathering for their annual summit on Thursday to press military-ruled Myanmar to end its gross human rights abuses. [continue...](#)

[http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory\\_343319.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory_343319.html)



**Rohingyas:** 101 East -Obsolete ASEAN-1, 2 Feb 09 - Part1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMNbLmnKg38>

**CNN:** Rohingyas: Oppressed Muslims of West Burma 1/2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kIP-tU89QA&feature=related>

**CNN:** Rohingyas: Oppressed Muslims of West Burma 2/2  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRCwVfqStLA&feature=related>

**Al-Jazeera:** Thailand accused of abusing boat people - 25 Jan 09  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsk5E6yquFw>

**Al-Jazeera:** Rohingya migrants claim Thai abuses - 24 Jan 09 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p-WyHJb\\_T4&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p-WyHJb_T4&feature=channel)

**Al-Jazeera:** Rohingyas claim Myanmar troop abuse - 27 Jan 09 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPHD-Hg\\_c-s&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPHD-Hg_c-s&feature=channel)

**CNN:** Rohingyas: The Forgotten People – Burma <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLF7OPaK9Ks&feature=fvsrc>

**CNN:** Rohingya: CNN exposé on Thai refugee abuse wins award  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/06/03/thailand.refugees.documentary.cnn.award/index.html>

**CNN:** Thai PM admits Rohingya boat people pushed out to sea  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/02/12/thailand.refugees.admission/index.html>

**CNN:** Angelina Jolie asks Thai government to aid Rohingya refugees  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/02/07/thailand.jolie.refugees/index.html>

**CNN:** Rohingya Refugees claim they were beaten, abandoned by Thai military  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/02/04/thailand.refugees/index.html>

**CNN:** More migrants washed ashore  
<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/world/2009/02/03/rivers.indo.rohingya.update.cnn>

**CNN:** Thai military faces more 'dump-at-sea' claims  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/02/03/thailand.refugees/index.html>

**CNN:** Thailand denies whipping Rohingya refugees on beaches  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/01/16/thailand.myanmar/index.html>

**BBC:** UN urges Thailand Rohingya refugee inquiry <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7858539.stm>

**BBC:** Thailand's deadly treatment of migrants [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7834075.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7834075.stm)

**BBC:** Survivor's ordeal on Andaman Sea [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7832947.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7832947.stm)

**BBC:** Thais 'leave boat people to die' [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7830710.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7830710.stm)

End to Rohingya plight draws closer <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPpgvIfqjzg&feature=related>

**CNN:** Thai PM promises 'no repeats' of Rohingya policy  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF3zqBK\\_gNU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF3zqBK_gNU&feature=related)

**Media:** Exclusive Rohingya Rescue <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDn6JWQbung&feature=channel>

**BBC:** Burmese Rohingya refugees 'rejected' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7870365.stm>

**BBC:** Burma 'must stop Rohingya abuse' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7878089.stm>

**Japanese TV:** Rohingya Boat People <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoWj1M7RvxE>

**Al-Jazeera:** اللاجئين الروهينجيا في بنغلاديش  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZmJhI8m5kU&feature=related>

**Al-Jazeera:** اللاجئين الروهينجيا في إندونيسيا - صهيبي جاس م  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkhftZoo33Y>

**2009** برماوي - أركان - بورما - معاناة مسلمي أركان في  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n82EOX06Nw&feature=related>

## ROHINGYAS: THE CRIES OF ANDAMAN



Feb 27, 2009: Heads of ASEAN Nations on Rohingya issue



CNN: Thai PM admits Rohingya boat people pushed out to sea



Rohingya refugees being towed out to the deep sea to die



Mistreatment of Rohingya refugees



Rohingya refugees being towed out to the deep sea to die



7 January 2009: Rohingya refugees on dry land after being rescued by fishermen off the coast of Indonesia.



28th May 2009: ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) meeting on Rohingyas



Rohingya refugees being towed out to the deep sea to die



Mistreatment of Rohingya refugees



Boatload of Rohingya refugees



27 January 2009: Torture of Rohingya refugees



7 January 2009: The Rohingya refugees lie on the ground after being rescued in Indonesia



28th May 2008: Bangladesh Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed talks on Rohingya issue with UNHCR Chief Antonio Guterres



4 February 2009: Refugees rest in hospital, Indonesia



4 February 2009: Rohingyas eat in hospital, Indonesia



4 February 2009: Torture of Rohingya refugees



4 February 2009: Rohingyas at a hospital in Idi Rayeuk



A homeless Rohingya refugee child in Malaysia



Bangladesh FM Dr Dipu Moni speaks on Rohingya issue



30 January 2009: Rohingya refugees pray in Indonesia



Rohingya being towed out to die in engine-less boat



4 February 2009: Rohingyas in Japan protest mistreatment of Rohingya boat people



Rohingya refugees in Thai Immigration

**The End**