

BURMA'S Rohingya Muslims



Amad Uddin

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**"I read the Koran,"
"To tell you the truth, I didn't
find anything I liked."**

**Good Buddhists shouldn't mix
socially with Muslims, who are
"snakes" and "mad dogs."**

Ashin Wirathu a monk who leads the radical movement 969

Introduction

The Muslim world is well versed with the suffering of our noble Ummah in Palestine, Syria, Kashmir, Chechnya, etc. I had assumed until recently not many knew about the plight and suffering of our brothers and sisters - the Rohingya Muslims. The Muslim world is now truly waking up to their suffering and becoming aware of their plight. Once again the world's attention is on the world's most persecuted minority.

As I write this report, information continues to trickle out on the atrocities being committed against the Rohingya Muslims. 2015 has turned into the darkest period of Rohingya history. Men, women, the elderly, children and babies are begging for help in ships that are barely remaining afloat in the Bay of Bengal. For much of the world, the Rohingya plight is an immigration and migration issue; a place where they can reside is the problem that needs solving. This however, disguises the fact is that the Burmese government has expelled them in such a way that in any other part of the world it would be considered genocide.

The western world appears to be blinded by a romantic narrative of sweeping change in Burma, signing new trade deals and lifting sanctions even while the abuses continue.

While the Muslim rulers continue to avert their glances or concerns away from the Rohingya Muslims, some Muslim leaders cry crocodile tears and still trade and have relations with Burma, while others expel Rohingya Muslims back to Burma due to nationalist fervour.

Muslims in 2015 enter a dark and uncharted territory. Every so often their plight reaches our attention; their plight has not gotten any better over the years, but worsened. I am assuming all the information taken to compile this report is factual and relevant. I had to rely on information from news websites, think tanks, and human rights groups as firsthand information from the ground is hard to obtain and check due to the repressive nature of the situation in Burma. The reason why this report was written was so that Muslims can become acquainted with the situation of the Rohingya Muslims in a comprehensive manner.

This report will aim to answer the following questions:

How much do we really know about their plight as Muslims?

What's the background to their situation they find themselves in?

And what different factors are at play that are further exacerbating the situation these powerless Muslims find themselves in?

Amad Uddin

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Burma's Muslims: A History

The Burmese government would like the world to believe that the Rohingya Muslims only came to Burma in the last 50 to 70 years. This claim is to further strengthen their case to the world that the Rohingya Muslims have no place in Burma and are migrants from Bangladesh. Islam came to the region around the 8th century under the Abbasid Khilafah of Harun al-Rashid. We know from that period that Muslims were arriving and spreading into the region with the message of Islam. At that time individual merchants and traders were also arriving via the sea to these new territories; over time Muslims settled in these areas, in places like the Arakan state.



Muslim history in the region can be seen from many monuments. The Budder Mukam Mosque was built in the 7th century but was taken by the military in 1978 and is used as a naval base camp.¹ The Sandhi Khan Mosque was built in 1433 by Muslim Army General Sandhi Khan, but was demolished by the military in 1996. Other Mosques that were built still stand today and many streets and villages have Muslim linked names in the Arakan state; from 1430 to 1784 the Muslims ruled in the Arakan state with the help from the Sultan of Bengal.

Burma Coming Out of the Cold

Burma has been ruled by a military junta for many decades, from 1962 to 2011, it was only when relations with the outside world started to thaw that military rule finally ceased in 2011. Since 1962 Burma under the junta was one of the world's most repressive and abusive regimes with abuses against Burma's many ethnic tribes being far reaching, torture, imprisonment, and extra judicial killing were wide spread. Burma is a poor country with crumbling infrastructure after many years of neglect, however it is rich in natural resources, including oil,² gas³ and precious stones. Reports suggest substantial untapped oil and gas reserves sit off the shores of the Arakan state where the Muslims are situated.⁴

Since coming out of the cold, economic sanctions have been lifted and President Thein has even visited the White House⁵ and 10 Downing Street. Elections are due to be held in Burma in October or November in 2015. Burma is now awash with foreign investors and companies seeking to benefit from the country's opening up.

In 2013 President Obama told President Thein Sein, *"We very much appreciate your efforts and leadership in leading Myanmar in a new direction. We want you to know that the*



United States will make every effort to assist you on what I know is a long, and sometimes difficult, but ultimately correct path to follow.”⁶

Genocide: Rohingya Muslims

The suffering of the Muslims of Burma is not a recent phenomenon; it has been taking place for decades. Relationships soured between Muslims and Buddhists during World War II and during Burma’s Independence period with violent clashes and insurgencies on both sides. After the military took over in 1962, the plight of the Muslims worsened as they were seen with suspicion in regards to their loyalties. In 1977 around 200,000 Muslims fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, to escape the violence and abuse. Many returned later but were still not recognized as citizens.

In 1982 a new citizenship law was introduced which cut off the rights of the Rohingya Muslims.⁷ There was growing calls for independence and more rights for Muslims in the Arakan State during this period and this made the army nervous, as a result the army was deployed into Arakan. The troops took land for their camps and for food they levied taxes and forced Muslims into labour.

With the army in the region and the worsening economic and violent situation, the Rohingya Muslims found themselves fleeing once again. Another 250,000 fled to Bangladesh in 1992 where many were repatriated thereafter.⁸ In 2001 riots broke out with Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims in the capital of Arakan, Sittwe after an argument between young monks and a Muslim stallholder.⁹ Human Rights Watch documented that overnight 20 people were killed, homes and businesses were torched, mosques and madrasas were destroyed.



In 2010 municipal elections led to further tensions in the Arakan state, contributing to the anti-Muslim violence in 2012. The alleged rape and murder of a Rakhine woman by Muslim men was the spark that was needed for the violence in 2012.¹⁰ Government figures, from the commission that was created to look into the violence, stated 98 people were killed and 123 people were injured from both communities, but it is hard to ascertain the true number due to the restrictive nature of the state and its apparatus. During the 2012 violence the police and army stood by as acts of looting, burning and killing of Muslims took place, in some instances they joined in such acts.¹¹ Thousands of Rohingya homes and businesses were destroyed and thousands were displaced.

Rohingya Muslims are denied citizenship, they have to gain permission to marry, they are denied education, and in many areas of Burma they are limited to having only two children. Their lands are taken, informal taxes are put on them, and many are living in government camps where they are not allowed to work or seek medical help from outside. Police and army monitor such camps closely, with

disease and malnutrition being rife. The penalty for leaving these camps is three months imprisonment, if a Rohingya is caught by the police. If caught by the wrong civilians, it could be a lynching and certain death. These government camps are concentration camps set up to break the resolve of the Rohingya Muslims in making them leave or submit to the government's oppressive rule.¹² In 2014 the Burmese government, with the help of the UN, conducted a census of the population. The Rohingya were banned from being included in the census as they were not deemed to be a recognized ethnic minority.¹³

It is no wonder, due to the concentration camps, that many have fled into the hands of heartless smugglers in order to escape. This is one of the reasons we see hundreds fleeing Burma into the sea due to the situation they face.

Migrants or Genocide?

Many of the world's schools study the plight of the Jews when they were placed in concentration camps, during the holocaust. The holocaust is understood as an act of genocide. Even Armenia is attempting to term the killing by Turks as genocide during World War 1. In the past we have seen genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and recently Darfur.

The UN defines genocide in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) as: *"...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."*¹⁴

The atrocities against the Rohingya Muslims clearly fit this definition. However, if the UN does recognise the plight of the Rohingya Muslims as genocide, then the International Community will be obliged to take action and demand the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Doing so will upset the plan to bring Burma "out of the cold" and go against western economic and strategic interests.

Burma has a population of around 53 million of which the Rohingya Muslim consist of around 1.3 million, approximately 2.5%. Despite the small proportion there are false rumours and scaremongering from the top of the Burmese state that Muslims want to overpopulate Burma through births. Burma has even introduced a birth control law. The controversial bill is one of four pieces of legislation driven by nationalist Buddhist monks who fear that the Muslim population is growing too quickly.¹⁵ All the policies undertaken by the Burmese state for decades against the Rohingya are related to genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Why Is the Poster Girl for Democracy Very Quiet?



Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) have remained silent over the Rohingya issue. One of the main reasons she is quiet is due to the elections coming up in 2015, she does not want anything to derail her chance of succeeding in the polls.

The Thein government has done well to create the fascist Buddhist group 969 Movement to counter Aung San Suu Kyi and her party with rising anti-Muslim sentiments. Aung San Suu Kyi is held up high in the west as the poster girl for democracy as she was a symbol of human rights through her years of imprisonment and isolation, but when it comes to the Rohingya issue she has been silent as the anti-Muslim propaganda stirred up by the government and the 969 Movement. It will be a political own goal with elections so close to take the side of the Rohingya Muslims. Aung San Suu Kyi has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; some may question what peace she has bought the Rohingya Muslims.

Aung San Suu Kyi rejected the notion of ethnic cleansing taking place in Burma and has said in a BBC interview: *"It's not ethnic cleansing," she said. "What the world needs to understand [is] that the fear is not just on the side of the Muslims, but on the side of the Buddhists as well."*¹⁶ Suu Kyi elaborated further: *"There's a quarrel whether people are true citizens under the law or whether they have come over as migrants later from Bangladesh. One of the very interesting and rather disturbing facts of this whole problem is that most people seem to think as that there was only one country involved in this border issue. But there are two countries. There's Bangladesh one side, there's Burma on the other and the security and the security of the border is surely the responsibility of both countries."*¹⁷

Fascist Buddhists

The fascist 969 Movement is nationalist movement, created and supported by the Thein government. The numbers 969 represent the virtues of the Buddha. There is nothing peaceful about this movement as its main purpose is to espouse anti-Muslim statements and threats. Its leader, Wirathu, is regarded as the movement's main face and role model and has called for the boycott of Muslim shops.¹⁸ In a YouTube video of a sermon given by Wirathu, he says that Muslims are taking over the country and destroying the Buddhist way of life.¹⁹ With thousands of followers already, and his support base growing by the day, he said *"You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog,"* referring to Muslims.²⁰ The government and security forces continue to support him



and let him carry on his anti-Muslim agenda.²¹

Interestingly when Wirathu was jailed in 2003 for inciting anti-Muslim violence he was released in 2012 as part of a prisoner amnesty. In Burma many shops and taxis put up the 969 Movement's sticker as a sign of support for this movement.

In 2013 Wirathu vowed to promote peace.²² Only time will tell whether the 969 Movement will become peaceful or will it just be another pawn in the government's plans.

Muslim World's Response to Rohingya Muslim Situation

Bangladesh - Bangladesh borders Burma in the southeast region of the country. Thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled across the border since 1977 during various insinuations of violence. Since the 1970's successive Bangladesh governments, civilian or military, have held the position that the Rohingya Muslims at one point or another must return back to Burma. None of the previous governments made the situation for Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh one of peace and tranquillity, and certainly not the present one. Rather it has deliberately made their lives unbearable, and pushed them into the desperate situation of trying to escape to anyone that will show even the slightest mercy.

In Bangladesh around 29,000 Rohingya Muslims live in official refugee camps, whilst another 200,000 live in unofficial camps.²³ Those living in the official camps are not allowed to work or go outside the camps, while those 200,000 unofficial refugees are open to abuse and arrest. The unregistered refugees have to fend for themselves as the Bangladesh government has banned aid agencies helping them as it may encourage more to come over from Burma.²⁴

Many of these refugees live around Bangladesh's famous tourist attraction Cox's Bazar, where they live in the open in unsanitary conditions, with food and security being scarce. Recently the Bangladesh government has undertaken the initiative to relocate the unregistered refugees to an island as they are hampering the image and status of Cox's Bazar as a tourist attraction.²⁵

To further strengthen its position against the Rohingya Muslims, the Bangladesh government has banned Bangladeshi nationals from marrying Rohingya Muslims and has banned Rohingya marrying Rohingya in order to get citizenship.²⁶ The Bangladesh government also has a policy of "pushing back" where the Bangladesh Border Guards (BGB) push back hundreds of boats of Rohingya Muslims away from Bangladesh.

"Every month hundreds of Rohingyas try to enter Bangladesh and we push them back," said Sirajul Islam, commander of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Damdamia Border Outpost (BOP) in Cox's Bazar district.

“We know they are being persecuted in Myanmar, but we can’t let them in. We need to obey the government policy, and also there are already a huge number of Rohingya people living in Bangladesh,” he said.²⁷

Despite the Bangladesh army going on countless UN missions (no country commits more troops to UN missions than Bangladesh), they have failed to support the Rohingya Muslims with their navy and military and to open the border with Bangladesh and Burma to allow the Muslims a safe haven let alone to stop the Burmese aggression.

Turkey - Turkey has given aid and money to help the Rohingya Muslims.²⁸ It has also sent military ships to the region to help.²⁹ Turkish Foreign Minister (FM) Ahmet Davutoglu along with Emine Erdogan, wife of Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, visited Burma in 2012 with aid. While all this is commendable the Rohingya Muslims need a military to stop the oppression they face. Turkey has one of the world’s advanced militaries and has the second largest army in NATO, yet it sends military ships with aid to the Rohingya where it should send these military ships fully armed to the region to send the Burmese government a message to stop oppressing Muslims. If Turkish ships and submarines were anchored off the Arakan state this would send a strong message to the Burmese that Muslims are one Ummah, and you cannot oppress Muslims and get away with it.



It’s disheartening that the Turkish authorities have not condemned what’s happening in Burma and only defined it is a humanitarian issue.³⁰

Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has accused Burma of ethnic cleansing and called for the International Community to solve this conflict.³¹ Like other nations, it has given money to help the Rohingya.³² Other than that not much has been forthcoming from the birth place of Islam.

While Saudi has sent the full force of its military to help in Bahrain and invade Yemen, the same cannot be said for it sending the military to help the Rohingya Muslims.

Qatar - Like Saudi, Qatar is good at giving money to the Rohingya Muslims. It has pledged \$50 million to help them in their plight.³³ The money they give, like Saudi, is distributed through the United Nations. Many Muslims may think this is a huge amount of money that Qatar is giving, but if you compare it to how much Qatar will spend on the World Cup 2022, it is pittance (Qatar is estimated to spend \$200 billion).³⁴ While the Qatari’s have funnelled arms to the rebels in Syria in its quest for regional influence, no arms or military support has been forthcoming to the Rohingya Muslims.

Indonesia - The world’s most populous Muslim nation has been changing their policy on the Rohingya issue when it suits them. When Rohingya Muslims arrived on the shores and waters off Indonesia, the

Indonesian government told the military to push them back into the sea (Like Bangladesh's push back policy).³⁵

When ordinary Muslims from Indonesia like the fishermen of Banda Aceh helped their fellow Muslims by pulling in their boats to dry land,³⁶ and as international news coverage grew, this forced the Indonesians to give refuge to the migrants from Burma for a year, but they didn't help those still at the sea.³⁷ Indonesia, like other Muslim countries in the region, is trying not to make the Rohingya issue their issue.

Malaysia - Malaysia is a country that most Rohingya Muslims try to flee to, but it is also a death trap for them. For months before this issue came to the fore there had been news of camps along the Malaysian and Thailand border and human rights abuses.³⁸

Ruthless people smugglers in conjunction with police and local politicians run these death trap camps and make huge profits. The jungles of Malaysia near the Thailand border have now been exposed of having mass graves of Rohingya migrants.³⁹ Many in these camps are raped, beaten, tortured into calling relatives for ransom money. Many Muslim women are raped and violated by these smugglers.⁴⁰

In Malaysia, refugees do not have rights. Refugees are treated as illegal migrants and are open to be abused, detained and tortured.⁴¹ Like Indonesia, Malaysia said, after pressure, that they too will house the Rohingya Muslims that made it a shore for one year, but after that it's someone else's problem.

Gambia - A poor country in Africa has said it will take the Rohingya Muslims, this is more of token of gesture than any real weight behind it.⁴² The country has its own problems of poverty, torture, human rights abuses etc. The Gambian people themselves flee Gambia to reach Europe and are dying in the Mediterranean Sea for a better life. Why is the government of Gambia not helping their own Muslim people?⁴³

Pakistan - Pakistan has been very quiet on the issue of the Rohingya Muslims. They have just released statements to raise concerns of their plight, but little else.⁴⁴

They have expressed their desire for this issue to be solved by the International Community. The question we should ask is why is Pakistan a country with a formidable army and one that has nuclear weapons not helping the Muslims of Burma. Like the Turkish army, both have militaries that could single handily solve the issue without lifting a rifle and ease the plight of their brothers and sisters in Burma.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) - Many of the Muslim countries listed, have used this organisation to try solving the Rohingya problem. This organisation was founded in 1969 to "*Safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.*"⁴⁵

It has 57 Muslim nations within it and it was created to divert the Ummah away from unifying under one single Muslim leadership. All this organisation does is paying lip service to the United Nations and just releases statements that serve no purpose and has no weight.

Muslim countries are still under occupation; and Muslims are still suffering at the hands of tyrants and oppressors and many of them are members of the OIC themselves.

Other Responses to Rohingya Muslims Situation

Thailand - Thailand has a long border with Burma and is the second largest exporter to Burma after China. In return, Thailand buys Burma's gas and their relationship over the years has been frosty to say the least. Like Malaysia, Thailand has been a place where Rohingya Muslims get caught up in a living nightmare. Since 2012 Thailand has been a transit point for Rohingya Muslims trying to get to Malaysia, and Thailand is the place where the dreaded jungle camps are located. Only now the true horrors of what happened to the Rohingya Muslims in these vast jungles is coming to the light.⁴⁶

In recent months mass graves have been found of men, women, and children. These recent grave finds are just the tip of the iceberg as many other such active camps exist in Thailand.

Heartless smugglers bring desperate Rohingya Muslims ashore to Thailand then keep them in jungle camps where they are kept in bamboo cages, beaten, raped, given no food or water for days. Then they are made to call relatives to get money out of them for the next leg of the journey.⁴⁷ The sad irony is that the Thai army, police, and local authorities have been complicit in these smuggling and human right abuses.⁴⁸ Only recently has the Thai government started taking steps to address this issue.

Philippines - The Philippine Government in conjunction with the UNCHR has offered to take Rohingya Muslim refugees and is making plans to do this.⁴⁹ Whether or not it does it is still to be seen, but recent statements from the government seems they are unlikely to take Rohingya Muslim refugees any time soon.⁵⁰

UK - The UK has a long history with Burma, a country which the UK had occupied for decades. After independence, Burma closed its doors to the world and its UK relationship came to a halt. Only recently, as Burma comes out of the cold, is the UK trying to muscle back in.⁵¹ David Cameron was the first UK prime minister to visit Burma since its independence in 1948 and on his visit he called for sanctions to be lifted.⁵²

Then President Thien visited the UK in 2013. The UK is rushing to get into Burma the same way the US is. UK exports to Burma increased by 239% between 2012 and 2013. While this was starting from a very low base, there are currently 40 to 50 British companies estimated to have a presence in Burma. The majority of these are professional services firms; such as lawyers, accountants and consultants.⁵³

Companies such as Standard Chartered Bank, JCB, Jaguar Land Rover, and Rolls Royce, all have a presence in Burma.⁵⁴ Recent onshore and offshore license awards for energy have brought success for a number of large and small British companies.⁵⁵ The UK has been known to train military and police forces that have a track record of human rights abuses like RAB in Bangladesh,⁵⁶ so it's no surprise that it is training the same military that has oppressed the Rohingya Muslims in Burma in the pursuit of normalising relations leading to economic opportunities.⁵⁷

USA - The US has played a key role in bringing Burma out from the cold. Like the UK, it has been mute on the issue of Rohingya Muslim abuses and oppression, stopping short of condemning the Burmese government. Its position has been of one of asking the Burmese government to improve political and economic reforms.⁵⁸

For many decades, sanctions were imposed on Burma, and only in recent years have relations between the US and Burma warmed. One of the main motives for the US engagement in Burma is to do with containing the rising influence of China in the region.⁵⁹

On one hand the US wants to contain China, but on the other it sees the potential untapped economic market to exploit. The US Embassy has launched over 20 public-private partnerships with US and Burmese institutions of higher education, businesses and private foundations, including Microsoft, Cisco, Gap Inc., Hewlett Packard, Proctor and Gamble, Johns Hopkins University, and many more.⁶⁰ In February 2014, army officials from Burma participated in a US-led military exercise in Thailand called "Cobra Gold," the largest annual multinational exercise in Asia.⁶¹

While the US is quick to rush and condemn the likes of Iran and North Korea about human rights violations, it is walking on egg shells with Burma. In May 2015 the Deputy Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken visited Burma where he gave a press conference in which he revealed that US policy on Burma will remain unchanged; they are willing to work with the government of Burma even if there are serious concerns about human rights, corruption and other matters for the foreseeable long term.⁶²

Blinken in this press statement said *“But right now there are significant remaining challenges, but at the same time Myanmar has been on a path forward”* he also said sanctions have been reduced in relation to Burma.⁶³

Following the easing of sanctions in 2012, US bilateral trade with Burma is increasing but still remains small. In the first four months of 2013, U.S. exports were \$92.6 million, dominated by US exports of aircraft parts and vehicle exports.⁶⁴



China - China is Burma's closest ally and trading partner and has supported the Burmese state since the 1950's. Burma fits into China's "One belt, One road" policy.⁶⁵ The Chinese have been with Burma since it isolated itself from the world, but now cracks are appearing in this relationship with the emergence of India and US. China over the years has been silent to the many abuses, oppression, torture that has been taking place in Burma. If the Chinese are silent over the treatment of Muslims in the Xinjiang province in China, what chance is there that they will speak out against the Burmese Muslim issue?



China sees Burma as a country where it can access natural resources, gain from trade, and get access to key strategic sea ports and land points. Like in Africa and South America, the Chinese invest and build heavily in Burma's infrastructure that consists of roads, rail, and ports in return for natural resources. By 2013, China has made a total of \$14.1 billion investments across 52 projects in Burma.⁶⁶ In the first three quarters of 2007, the bilateral trade volume between China and Burma reached \$1.435 billion.⁶⁷ In 2011 the trade between the two countries reached \$4.4 billion.⁶⁸

In the past, China has helped Burma with its UN veto.⁶⁹ For many years China and Burma have maintained close military relations; China supplied Burma with military equipment and helped to modernize its military, even during the sanctions imposed by the West. As of 2014 Burma spent 23.2 percent of its national budget on military spending, the highest in the region.⁷⁰

In March 2013 Burma's military was granted a \$2.4 billion annual budget, just over 12 percent of total government spending in the poverty-stricken country. They will invest about \$1.25 billion buying aircraft, and weapons mainly from China.⁷¹ They have been buying from the Chinese since the 1990's. The cracks in the relationship widened when President Thein stopped a Chinese-backed \$3.7 billion hydropower dam project in 2011 in response to local opposition. The project would have supplied electricity to China.⁷² In 2015 things got worse after the Burmese military bombed and killed civilians in China after skirmishes with ethnic Chinese rebels on the Burma and China border.⁷³

For the Rohingya Muslims, the gas pipeline in Arakan state called the Shwe Gas Project is not a blessing. Despite the pipeline going right through their state they reap no benefits. The Chinese helped construct it in 2010. The project consists of two pipelines, approximately 1,000 kilometres long, which will carry Burmese natural gas and imported crude oil across Burma to China.⁷⁴ The pipeline also comes with a special economic zone being set up in the Arakan state. The gas line became operational

in 2013 and the oil line in 2014. This gas and oil line has resulted in people losing land as well as their fishing waters around this facility.⁷⁵ This pipeline only seeks to benefit the Chinese and Burmese governments at the expense of the Arakan people

India - India in recent years has been spreading its wings in the region from Bangladesh to Burma. Its foreign policy is based on its “Act East” policy, changed by Modi when it was before “Look East,” and Burma is an important part of its foreign policy. India’s relationship with Burma goes back many decades and they have historical, cultural and religious connections. A key part to India’s “Act East” policy is to rival China’s rise in the region as an economic powerhouse.

In the Arakan state, India is helping Burma build a seaport to link with them for transport and trade purposes. The work started in 2010 and will be completed in 2015, and the Indian government is footing the bill, estimated at \$214 million.⁷⁶ This project has negatively affected Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Arakan state socially and environmentally.

India has given several loans to Burma over the years. In 2012 \$500 million was given, and Indian companies such as Essar, GAIL, and ONGC Videsh Ltd, have invested in Burma’s energy sector. Tata Motors has set up a heavy turbo-truck assembly plant with financial assistance from the Indian Government. Bilateral trade has grown from \$12.4 million in 1980-81 to \$2.18 billion in 2013-14.⁷⁷ All this increase in political and economic co-operation is starting to shake the Chinese dragon.

In the past, Indian relations with the Junta regime were not so friendly and relations soured until recently when India realised it had to forgo its ethics and stance on democracy in pursuit over economic interests.⁷⁸ Like the US and the UK, it has sensed an opportunity with China’s relationship cracks showing.

Modi of India and Xi of China do have one thing in common which is their deafening silence on the plight of the Rohingya Muslims.⁷⁹

North Korea - North Korea and Burma are becoming close partners. Over the years North Korea has helped Burma militarily with help constructing facilities, with training, and weapons.⁸⁰ At times the relationship has been edgy (Like the Rangoon bombing where there was an attempted assassination on the South Korean president by North Korea in 1983 in Burma⁸¹).

The relationship between the two countries resumed in 2007 and at one point both countries were closer than ever in their isolation of the world. The situation has since changed with Burma now engaging with the world whilst North Korea still remains isolated. America has been able to pull Burma away from North Korean influence, rewarding it with lifting sanctions and reconnection to the world. It is now pressuring the Burmese government to cut ties with North Korea completely.⁸²

Conclusions

The situation the Rohingya Muslims find themselves in has become complex as regional and international players pursue their interests in the region. This is similar to “The Great Game” of 1813 where Great Britain and Russia played out against each other for supremacy in Central Asia; Muslim countries like Afghanistan were caught up in this. The same is true with the Rohingya Muslims in regards to Burma where they find themselves caught up in the political manoeuvring of countries like China, USA, UK, and India all competing for regional dominance and influence.

As Burma comes out of the cold and reconnects with the outside world, countries are clamouring to reap the benefits from this and gain new partnerships with Burma. It is in these times that the Rohingya Muslims have become the scapegoats and left in the middle with no one to look after their affairs. China is still the main partner in Burma at present but as time goes by the relationship will be tested as Burma’s government has never been loyal to anyone and will work with anyone to pursue their interests. This is where the USA will in the coming months and years seek to exploit and gain favour with Burma. The Chinese have much to lose with this developing situation and they won’t give up easily as they have so much investment embedded in Burma and its borders. If relations do sour, the Chinese can create instability in Burma through economic measures or political (using ethnic Chinese rebels on the Burmese and Chinese Border).

As Burma opens up to the world and money pours in, this will further exacerbate the situation where corruption is already rife and will make it more worse (like Vietnam after communism), and the real losers will be the average persons on the streets of Burma. The help and solution for the Rohingya Muslims will not be coming from the West or the poster girl for democracy as they have their aims and interests. In fact in the coming months, with the elections on the horizon, the plight and situation of the Rohingya Muslims will worsen as each group stirs up anti-Muslim rhetoric to position themselves with an electorate. The Rohingya Muslims are easy scapegoats instead of political and military corruption and mismanagement by the government.

The elections in Burma will be close, and the outcome will likely be a partnership government of Aung San Suu Kyi and the successor to President Thein. Even after the elections, the plight of the Rohingya Muslims will not be solved as both parties seem determined to push ahead with their policies against the Rohingya Muslims. Help and solutions will not be forthcoming from the Muslim countries as they are fixed to their artificial borders and to their shallow minded national interests.

The elder Rohingya Muslims may have stuck to hope of a political solution, but the younger part of the population that is growing every day may not want the political solution as their elders did and they may look to the gun as a solution.

The fermenting of violence as a solution could be done in countries like Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia where vast numbers of Rohingya Muslims reside and live in dire conditions, and these countries already have well known Jihadi groups operating within them.

It's a real shame because the Muslim countries in the region could easily deal with Burma militarily. They have the manpower and military equipment to do so, yet they are in their barracks. The Rohingya Muslims need a political voice and a state where their plight would be taken on and where concrete steps would be taken to protect them and put an end to their suffering.

The Rohingya Muslims can gain some comfort in knowing that even though the rulers of the Muslim world may have turned their backs on them, the same cannot be said about this noble Ummah. The Ummah has started to help them in any many ways, physically by aid and shelter and by raising awareness of their situation.

We make dua to Allah سبحانه وتعالى that the rest of the year and the future bring better times for our oppressed Ummah in Burma, and that Allah سبحانه وتعالى lowers His سبحانه وتعالى Mercy on them and changes their situation from one of fear to one of safety and security.

Amad Uddin

9 Dhu al-Hijjah 1436 AH

September 23, 2015 CE

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