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Foundation



## **ROHINGYA EXODUS**

### ***Acts of genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar***

Fact Finding Mission Report on Rohingya

*Odhikar has been monitoring the situation of the Rohingya people since 2012. After the brutal military operations on 25 August 2017, the biggest Rohingya influx occurred and hundreds of thousands Rohingyas entered Bangladesh. During the operations conducted by the Myanmar security forces, the Rohingyas experienced genocide, enforced disappearances, mass and gang rapes and became victims of torture and other violence.*

Cover photo: A Rohingya family entering Bangladesh. Photo: Odhikar (15/09/2017, Shahporir Dwip, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh) ©Odhikar

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## **Executive Summary**

The Myanmar government has been conducting various operations against the Rohingya community in the Rakhine state of Myanmar<sup>1</sup> on various pretexts through a process of ethnic repression, torture and eviction from Myanmar, for many years. After recent operations carried out by the Myanmar government, people belonging to the Rohingya community have taken refuge in Bangladesh by crossing the border. The biggest influx of Rohingya people was after 25 August 2017. Rohingyas entered Bangladesh through at least 20 entry points along the 143-kilometre border between the Bandarban and Cox's Bazaar Districts. No one has the exact number/statistics of Rohingyas who have fled to Bangladesh. There is no specific information regarding how many Rohingyas remain in the Rakhine state either. Local people and non-governmental organisations say that the new Rohingya influx has already crossed one million in Bangladesh.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, the Odhikar team organised a fact-finding mission from 10-16 January 2018 to gather information regarding the human rights violations in Myanmar and the humanitarian situation in various refugee camps in Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh.

During the operations conducted by the Myanmar security forces, the Rohingya community experienced genocide, enforced disappearances, mass and gang rapes and became victims of torture and other violence.<sup>3</sup> After interviewing many Rohingya victims who took refuge in Bangladesh, Odhikar has also learnt that the torching of houses, destruction of villages and detaining children and women in the camps by military and Buddhist extremists have also taken place.

After visiting the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf, the fact-finding mission have found that most of the Rohingyas are living in makeshift houses built in crevices. The mission also found that, the refugees are receiving enough food, basic medical facilities in the daytime and non-formal education for children. They have makeshift latrine facilities and drinking water, although inadequate. Odhikar fears that in the monsoon season the situation in the camps would be dangerous if necessary and effective measures are not taken immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> The Arakan state was renamed as Rakhine by the Myanmar government.

<sup>2</sup> The daily Bangladesh Pratidin, 19/10/2017; <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/first-page/2017/10/19/273358>

<sup>3</sup> Permanent People's Tribunal on Myanmar which was held in September 2017 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; <https://tribunalonmyanmar.org/>

The fact-finding mission has recommendations for the Bangladesh government, International Criminal Court and International Communities including UN, EU, ASEAN.

1. Bangladesh government and the international community must put severe pressure and sanctions on the Myanmar government to take necessary steps for establishing peace in the Rakhine state.
2. All civil and political rights and recognition have to be given to the Rohingyas before repatriation.
3. A safe Rakhine state has to be created for the consideration of the repatriation and the repatriation process has to be voluntary.
4. All the perpetrators, including members of the Myanmar Army, Buddhist criminals and others who were directly or indirectly involved in committing genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar's Rakhine state, should be brought to justice;
5. The United Nations must involve itself in the repatriation initiative in order to avoid conflict with Myanmar.
6. Necessary steps should be taken to protect the refugees from the disaster that is likely to take place in the monsoon season.
7. Adequate medical support should be given to the Rohingyas, especially those who entered Bangladesh with different kinds of injuries- including bullet wounds and rape victim. Many of the rape victims have become pregnant.
8. Special care has to be given to the orphan children.
9. The Bangladesh government and relevant authority should take necessary steps to protect the children and women who are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.
10. Trauma-counselling facilities should be provided.

## Acronyms

DAB	: Democratic Alliance of Burma
FF	: Fact-finding
HRD	: Human Rights Defender
NLD	: National League for Democracy
UN	: United Nations
ASEAN	: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
RRRC	: Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
EU	: European Union
ISCG	: Inter Sector Coordination Group
SSD	: Security Service Division (Ministry of Home Affairs)

## I – INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya community of the Rakhine state of Myanmar is the most persecuted community in the world. The Rohingyas are deprived of their fundamental human rights. They are not even considered citizens of Myanmar, and are being evicted from their own ancestral land where they have been living for generations. This eviction process is not new. The Myanmar government and the Myanmar Army conducted several major operations against Rohingyas in the name of ‘clearance’ operation. After the attack on Myanmar security force by ‘extremists’ on October 2016 and August 2017, the Myanmar Army brutally repressed the Rohingya community in Rakhine state and committed genocide to evict them. Over 700,000 Rohingya people fled from Myanmar and took shelter in several areas of Bangladesh including Cox’s Bazaar, Teknaf etc.



Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazaar, Photo: Odhikar

The Myanmar government has launched several large-scale operations on Rohingyas based on various excuses, before. These operations include identifying ‘illegal immigrants’ conducted by the Military junta in Myanmar in 1977 in the name of 'Operation Nagamina' or 'Dragon King'. At that time, the Myanmar military and local Buddhist criminals launched a massive assault on the Rohingya Muslims. In May 1978, many refugees from Myanmar were forced to take refuge in Bangladesh and several other countries.

The Aung San Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy (NLD) won the 1990s election but Myanmar's military junta did not hand over the power to the NLD. More than 21 ethnic groups

who wanted democracy in Myanmar created the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) and announced the initiation of their movement to restore democracy. The All Burma Muslim Union, with other organisations of Rohingya and the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front, joined DAB. To remain in power, the military junta instigated ethnic conflict between Rohingyas and local Buddhist criminals. In this context, the Military tortured Rohingyas during operations carried out at different times.<sup>4</sup> Being unable to tolerate the torture, more than two hundred thousand refugees fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh and other countries.<sup>5</sup>

In 2012 the Government of Myanmar and Buddhist criminals started their attempt to wipe out the Muslims. The government tried to hide this communal attack on Muslims by calling the violence a Buddhist-Muslim ethnic clash. The local government and the central government, at the behest of the police and security forces and Rakhine Buddhist criminals, became very enthusiastic about evicting Rohingyas out of Myanmar.<sup>6</sup>



Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh through Shahporir Dwip, Photo: Odhikar

On 9 October 2016 extremists attacked a checkpoint in Rakhine near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and killed nine policemen.<sup>7</sup> In another incident at least 71 persons were killed on 25 August 2017 during an attack by Rohingya resistance fighters in Taung Bazaar Village of Buthidaung City of the Rakhine State of Myanmar, at 30 police outposts in some villages of Kawauk Pandu in Maungdaw and in an Army camp located at Taung Bazaar Village<sup>8</sup>. After

<sup>4</sup> <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/bangladesh- plight-rohingya>, <http://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/suzand7/29883935>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/rohingya\\_report\\_2002.pdf](https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/rohingya_report_2002.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/04/22/burma-end-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37601928>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/at-least-71-killed-in-myanmar-as-rohingya-insurgents-stage-major-attack-idUSKCN1B507K>



these incidents, the government started ‘Clearance Operations’ to find the attackers. Using this pretext, they started committing genocide and mass rapes on the Rohingya community. Many Rohingya people were victims of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, gang rapes and torture during the violent operations carried out by the Myanmar military and local Buddhist criminals in the Rakhine. Furthermore, several incidents of arson and mass arrests also took place. As a result, by crossing the Naf River, Rohingyas began to enter Bangladesh in the thousands.<sup>9</sup> Various human rights organisations, the UN and a few other countries made critical statements of the operations led by the Myanmar Army.

In light of this situation, Odhikar, a human rights organisation in Bangladesh, conducted a fact-finding mission in the refugee camps from 10-16 January 2018 to collect information about the actual situation in Myanmar and analyse the information to understand the pattern of genocide and also to make a proper documentation of the violence.

### ***1.1 Objective and Methodology***

#### **Objective:**

The main objective of the mission was to collect information about the actual human rights situation in Myanmar and analyse the information to understand the pattern of genocide faced by the Rohingya survivors and also to make a proper documentation of the violence for future reference.

#### **Methodology:**

The fact-finding (FF) mission visited the registered and unregistered refugee camps in Teknaf, Thaingkhali, Balukhali, Hakimpata and Kutub Palong in Cox’s Bazaar, the Southern district of Bangladesh. It interviewed eight victims and witnesses of the violence. Additionally, the FF mission organised a focus group discussion with human rights defenders associated with Odhikar, local journalists and Rohingya leaders. Despite the short timeframe and low resources, the FF mission tried to conduct a preliminary fact-finding mission as best and as credibly as possible.

Odhikar conducted several interviews with the Rohingya people from different villages of the Rakhine state of Myanmar from 11-16 January 2018. These refugees were chosen based on the severity of the violence they had faced; how they survived the massacre; whether they are the only member of their family to have survived and so on.

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<sup>9</sup> Statement of the Rohingya victims collected by Odhikar

Several meetings took place in Chittagong and Cox’s Bazaar districts with the Rohingya leaders, local journalists and human rights defenders associated with Odhikar on 10 and 11 January 2018. In the meetings, they discussed the selection and deployment of the field assistance and the scope of work and strategies for collecting information. The discussion also included the situation of the refugee camps, security systems, and the need for interpreters and so on.

The report was drafted based on the notes, audio and video documentation. The collected information was reviewed at the end of the mission. The gaps in the collected information were filled up with the help of Odhikar’s HRDs and activists inside the Rohingya camps. Later the information was reviewed again and finalised.

## ***1.2 Methodological Limitations***

### **Limited Sample Size**

The primary sample size involves 20 Rohingya survivors and human rights activists, which is just a fraction of the refugee population in the camps. Although every effort has been made to ensure proper representation in the choice of survivors for interviews, the information collected is still not be exhaustive.

### **Number of Rohingyas**

It was not possible to determine the exact figure of Rohingya in refugee camps. As work on a centralised database is going on by RRRC, it might take some time for a final figure to come out. The figures currently available differ from agency to agency, and these too are based on extrapolation.

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Total Refugees</i>	<i>Post 25 August 2017 Arrivals</i>
UNHCR <sup>10</sup>	876,049	671,000
IOM <sup>11</sup>	898,300	687,000
ISCG <sup>12</sup>	1,100,160 (Government figure of biometric registration)	
SSD <sup>13</sup>	1,117,575 (Registered till 23.05.2018)	

<sup>10</sup> See, footnote 1 above.

<sup>11</sup> See, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/iom-bangladesh-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-response-external-update-20-26-april>

<sup>12</sup> ISCG. 2018. *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis* (12 April 2018). [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/20180413\\_iscg\\_sit\\_rep\\_1.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/20180413_iscg_sit_rep_1.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ssd.gov.bd/site/page/2c2af38f-e063-449f-832b-c16dbad2756d/>

## **Accuracy of Dates**

The report builds on the memory of Rohingya men and women who have survived the worst forms of structural and direct violence one can think of, and have been struggling hard to come to terms with it. As such, the dates of events narrated by them may not always be accurate. What remains doubtless is the horrendous story of suffering they have endured, which was evident from the scars on their bodies, amputated body parts, and frank and open admission by women sexually abused by security forces.

### ***1.3 Mission Members and their Roles***

#### **Mission Members**

The FF mission's deployment comprised of Mr. A S M Nasiruddin Elan, Director of Odhikar, Mr. Md. Ashiqur Rahman, fact-finding officer of Odhikar; Mr. Osman Jahangir, field assistant of Odhikar, local human rights defender Ms. Roksana Akter and Mr. Rafiq, Mr. Jane Alam, Mr. Safiullah, HRDs from the Rohingya community.

#### **Role Assignment**

The mission activities were divided into two parts. Initially, one group conducted the FGD in Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar districts with the Rohingya leaders, local journalists and human rights defenders associated with Odhikar on 10 and 11 January 2018.

In the mean time, the other group of the mission carried out all the preparatory activities. Upon arrival in the field, the whole team sat together and sketched the mission plan scheduled times for movement to the refugee camps; who to interview; developed a strategy to take interviews while considering the camp situation; discussed security concerns and developed fact-finding steps. This team took interviews with the Rohingya people of different villages in Rakhine from 11-16 January 2018. One member was assigned to take audio and video documentation, and another member was assigned to take notes of the main points and their observations. A set of guiding questions (Annex 2) was developed to facilitate the interaction.



Information collection from a victim, Photo: Odhikar

### ***1.4 Structure of the Report***

The report is organised into six parts, including this introductory section that discusses the objectives and methodology. The second part presents a brief history of the persecution against Rohingyas and the pattern of persecution. It contains their own experience and refers some articles and reports. The third part presents the patterns of violence they had endured before being forced to leave for Bangladesh from their lands in Rakhine state. The fourth part presents an overview of the situation inside the camps based on observations as well as information shared by the refugees. The fifth section presents in brief how the refugees look at their future. The final section presents conclusions and recommendations drawn from the discussions in previous sections.

## **II– HISTORY OF RIGHTS VIOLATION AND PERSECUTION AGAINST ROHINGYAS**

### ***2.1 Human rights of Rohingya people (1962 to September 2016)***

The systematic violence against the Rohingya community should be analysed in the context of longstanding wide-spread discrimination against Rohingyas' over civil and political rights, massive violations of human rights and poor execution of their economic, social and cultural rights which led to their eviction through a brutal process, from their ancestral land. The Rohingya community started suffering when General Ne Win came into power in 1962. Since then, discrimination began to increase gradually against the Rohingya community. Even Rohingyas who were in government services started facing widespread discrimination and after 1970, the Myanmar government stopped recruiting soldiers from the Rohingya community.<sup>14</sup> The Military junta passed a draconian Citizenship Act on 15 October 1982 and through that they took away the citizenship rights of Rohingya people. As a result, Rohingyas became refugees in their own land and faced severe restrictions to their movement and faced violence and discrimination.

The Myanmar government introduced three types of citizenship cards in 1989, but Rohingyas have not been given any kinds of card. As a result, it became difficult for Rohingyas to survive as citizens in Myanmar. In 1994, General Than Shew's government stopped birth certificates of Rohingya children. In 1995, the authorities granted many Muslims white 'temporary registration cards' that did not grant citizenship, regardless of whether or not the card-holder previously held citizenship documents. On 31 March 2015 white cards were revoked following a Rakhine-led campaign against them.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it has become very difficult for Rohingya people to survive in Myanmar because they are continuously being deprived of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Some local discriminatory laws like the Maungdaw Township Peace and Development Council restricts the marriage of the Rohingya community people and the birth rate. The Rohingyas face severe restrictions to freedom of movement, even between villages; burdensome marriage permission requirements; social prohibitions; and strict enforcement of prohibitions against unauthorised construction/repair of homes or religious buildings. Rohingyas who violate these

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<sup>14</sup> [bangla.tribe.ir/2010-05-01-08-09-34/2011-09-17-11-03-03/item/38956](http://bangla.tribe.ir/2010-05-01-08-09-34/2011-09-17-11-03-03/item/38956)

<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International, *The Rohingya Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied*, p. 12. See also- The International Crisis Group, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, p. 11.; Overall- <http://statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf>

restrictions face imprisonment and torture. Other human rights abuses include forced labor and widespread extortion, which exacerbate the poverty.<sup>16</sup>

Admissions in the primary schools in the villages of the Rohingya community were very strict. There were no chances of getting higher education because of the insufficiency of secondary schools and the barring of opportunities of studying in universities by the Military junta.<sup>17</sup> There was hardly any medical facility for the Rohingyas. There were a few health centers in the Rohingya dominated villages but due to systemic deprivations, they did not get adequate medical assistance. Due to various restrictions by the government of Myanmar on international organizations, they were not able to take any health care initiatives for Rohingyas either.<sup>18</sup> Most of the Rohingyas have never been vaccinated.<sup>19</sup>

Buying and selling property by Rohingyas were prohibited. Buying and selling of land and houses depended on the government. Even cattle and domestic animals couldn't be bought and sold without someone else's permission. Although the Rohingyas were plowing their land and producing crops, they had to give a significant amount of share to the government. Government jobs were banned for the Rohingyas.<sup>20</sup>

Almost all Rohingya males were often taken to the military camps for forced labor. They had no choice to refuse. Whoever denied going to the camp would be beaten or fined. They had to work in the hills for 7-15 days without any food. Usually they had to eat banana tree leaves. Whoever fell sick was kicked out.<sup>21</sup>

Here we have used past tense, as it is assumed that there are no/very little Rohingyas in Myanmar after August 2017 genocide.

## ***2.2 October 2016 Onwards***

On 9 October 2016 'extremists' attacked a checkpoint in the Rakhine state near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and killed nine policemen.<sup>22</sup> In another incident at least 71 persons were killed on 25 August 2017 during an attack by Rohingya resistance fighters in Taung Bazaar Village of Buthidaung City of the Rakhine State of Myanmar and at 30 police outposts in some villages of Kawauk Pandu in Maungdaw and an Army camp located at Taung Bazaar

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<sup>16</sup> UNHCR and Burma: NRS Presence at Risk: High Commissioner May Visit Telegram from US embassy Yangon 12 December 2008, [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08RANGOON936\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08RANGOON936_a.html). and <http://statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Policies\\_of\\_Persecution\\_Feb\\_25\\_Fortify\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Policies_of_Persecution_Feb_25_Fortify_Rights.pdf),

<sup>18</sup> <http://statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2017/12/13/unicf-rohingya-children-bangladesh-myanmar/>

<sup>20</sup> Statement of the Rohingya victims collected by Odhikar

<sup>21</sup> Odhikar's FF

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37601928>

Village<sup>23</sup>. After those attacks, the Myanmar government has been conducting various operations against the Rohingya community in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.



Smoke from the burnt houses in Myanmar, Photo: Odhikar

During these operations, hundreds of soldiers along with local Buddhist extremists attacked Rohingya dominated parts of different villages, and torched, vandalized, destroyed and looted the houses. Rohingya people experience genocide, mass rape, enforced disappearances; arson attacks and became victims of torture and other violence. As a result thousands of Rohingyas fled into Bangladesh by crossing the different points in the territorial border and the Naf River.

### ***2.3 Journey towards Bangladesh***

After 25 August, 2017 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh through different points of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Most of the survivors escaped their villages to the hill forest. Then they traveled the whole forest mostly without having any food and reached near the Naf River and crossed the by boat to enter Bangladesh. In most cases, it took two to 14 days to reach Bangladesh from Myanmar.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/at-least-71-killed-in-myanmar-as-rohingya-insurgents-stage-major-attack-idUSKCN1B507K>



Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh, Photo: Odhikar

To cross the Naf River, most of the Rohingyas used fishing boats. They had to pay money and give their ornaments to the boatmen or the boat owners to take them to Bangladesh. After coming to Bangladesh, they took shelter beside the roads and market places. At the beginning, it was very tough as the Bangladesh government was not willing to let them in. Many drowned in the Naf River when the Bangladesh border security system refused entry. Later, the Rohingyas were allowed to enter Bangladesh.



Rohingyas arrive at Teknaf crossing the Naf River. Photo: The Daily Star, 8 September 2017



Many locals gave shelter to many of the refugees for a few days especially to those who were severely injured or carrying infants or pregnant women. Only a few refugees could go to the previously established Rohingya camps, if they found their relatives in the camps. After the middle of September 2018, the Bangladeshi government took initiatives to move the refugees to a certain place and into makeshift camps. This commenced in the Unchiprang area.

### III- PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE

#### 3.1 Torching houses and destruction of the villages

Rohingyas have always been repressed by the Myanmar Military and extremist Buddhists. Rohingyas were familiar with the looting, extortion, vandalizing of houses and shops. However, after 9 October 2016 and 25 August 2017, these atrocities exponentially escalated. In Rakhine (Arakan) state, village after village was set on fire, including mosques and madrassas. A former 'Moktob' teacher, 32 year old Toha from Dumabai village of Maungdaw said:



Toha, injured Rohingya

*Three days before Eid-Ul-Adha at around 8:00am, I heard the sound of gun fire. I got out of the house and saw around 200-300 soldiers were entering our village and firing indiscriminately at the Rohingya people who were trying to escape. Me and my other family members left our house and took shelter beside the canal. I saw the military were also throwing 'Lansa' (explosive-like rocket launcher) at the houses of the Rohingyas. A few soldiers were throwing liquid on the houses and setting them on fire. Within a few hours, most of the houses of the village were burnt down.*

In the afternoon of 27 August 2017, 19 year old Abdul Karim was in a mosque with other devotees in Swa Prang (Burmese name Chut Pyine) Village. In the afternoon, he saw many soldiers along with some Buddhist extremists attack the village and burn the mosque. Abdul Karim along with a few others could flee from that place. He said:

*On 27 August 2017 at around 2:00 pm, I was in the mosque. After finishing the prayer, I got out of the mosque. At that time, many soldiers along with local Buddhist extremists, attacked our village. They set fire to a mosque and opened fire indiscriminately at Rohingyas who were fleeing. I and approximately 20 other villagers took shelter in the house of Sona Mia. After a while, some soldiers entered the house and shot at us. Two other people and I jumped through a window and into a pond beside the house. At that time, I was shot in my leg but I could*



Abdul Karim, Survivor

*reach the other side of the pond. I saw soldiers and Buddhist extremists shot the others dead. Then they set fire to the house. Later I was rescued by some villagers and taken to Bangladesh. Six of my family members were killed. It is still a nightmare to me. When I remember my dead relatives, I feel pain inside me. My mother is traumatized and cries for my siblings.*

### **3.2 Mass Killings**

Former residents of different Rohingya dominated villages in the Rakhine state of Myanmar told Odhikar that the Military along with Buddhist criminals entered Rohingya dominated villages with knives, sticks and guns and went on a mass killing spree. Many of the victims were gunned down, slaughtered and burned to death.

Ms. Rehana Begum (22), resident of Diyal Toli Village of Maungdaw whose 16 family members along with other villagers were killed by Myanmar Military, said:

*Three days before Eid-Ul-Adha at around 8:00am, Myanmar soldiers attacked my village. They were torching houses and firing indiscriminately at the Rohingya*



Rehana Begum (R) and her husband

*people who were trying to escape. Me along with my husband and children left our house and started moving towards my father's house in Tulatoli Village. We crossed a river and went through the hill forest. We reached the village early the next morning, but at that time the military also attacked that village. Therefore, we took shelter in a nearby hill forest. From there, I saw the soldiers along with Buddhist extremist gathering Rohingyas in a field nearby the hill forest. I saw my parents, siblings and their families over there along with other Rohingyas. The soldiers shot at the gathering and killed men, women and children except for a few young girls. The girls were taken away. A Few people tried to flee, but soldiers fired at them from the back and most of them were killed. In that massacre field, 16 of my relatives, including my parents, siblings and their families, were killed. After that the soldiers poured liquid on the bodies and set them on fire.*

Another survivor of Swa Prang Village, Soydul Islam, aged 45 said that,

*On 27 August 2017 at around 2:00 am, when I was sleeping, the Myanmar military attacked my village. The soldiers were searching for some Rohingya youths of the village, who took photos and videos during the massacre earlier perpetrated by the soldiers. Three soldiers entered my house and dragged me out and started beating me with their rifle butts. My pelvis was fractured due to this. At that time other members of*



Soydul Islam (R) and his family

*my family took shelter behind a nearby bush. Two days later the soldiers attacked the village again and slaughtered my brother-in-law Yusuf and took away Yusuf's daughter, his daughter in law and two grandsons. The next day all of them were found dead in a paddy field, having been shot in the head.*

### ***3.3 Violence against Women, including Gang Rape and Mass Rape***

After the attacks on Myanmar security forces, the government started 'Clearance Operations' to find the 'extremists'. The Myanmar Army and Buddhist extremists' committed acts of sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls. Violations included gang rape, raping girls in front of their parents and siblings; and raping wives in front of their husbands, killing of children while raping mothers, burning of homes and mass shootings.

Among the Rohingya survivors, who fled such violence is Ms. Dildar Begum, aged 30. She was raped and has witnessed the brutal killings of many villagers, including 19 of her family members. Dildar Begum said that,

*On 29 August 2017 when the Myanmar Army and local Buddhist criminals attacked my village (Tulatuli), me along with my husband, children, other family members and many villagers left their houses and ran towards the dam beside the Tulatuli canal, while the soldiers were chasing us. The soldiers surrounded us and separated the young women. After that the soldiers killed men, women and children. I saw several hundreds of Rohingyas killed. Later they buried all the*

*bodies in six trenches at Tulatuli swamp, which were dug by the Rohingyas before*



Dilder Begum (R) showing her daughter's injury

*their death; each trench was 50-60 feet long, five to six feet wide and four to five feet deep. Later the soldiers took me and my four children and other young women*

*to a house in the village. I saw many bodies of women and children inside the house. The floor of the house was covered in bloodstains. The soldiers raped me and also hit my four children with rifle butts and smashed their heads. As a result, three of my children died. The soldiers also hit me in the head too. Then the soldiers set fire to the house and left me there. My 10-year old daughter and I managed to escape from there.*



Dilder Begum (R) showing her wounds

#### **IV- SITUATION OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN COX'S BAZAAR, BANGLADESH**

The Rohingya refugees have taken shelter in Cox's Bazaar district in Bangladesh. There are 14 registered and unregistered camps in the Ukhiya and Teknaf areas. Some are Kutub Palong camp, Taingkhali camp, Nayapara camp etc. There are also extensions to those camps.



A Rohingya child carrying relief from the distribution center, Photo: Odhikar

- Rohingyas are living under in crowded, unhygienic and highly vulnerable conditions. Many of them are living in makeshift huts in crevices in the hills.
- Many of the Rohingyas, especially those who entered Bangladesh with different kinds of injuries-including bullet wounds-do not have sufficient access to healthcare. Although they are getting basic medical treatment during the daytime.
- Safe water and sanitation facilities are inadequate. Most of the toilets are almost filled up and the tube wells were not working. Many families are living in the top of the hills and they had to come down to collect drinking water.
- It was learnt that many Rohingya children living in the camps are suffering from malnutrition. There are some children-friendly spaces but are found to be mostly inactive. A few NGOs are providing a non-formal education facility for children. There were also some 'Moktobs' where children are getting religious knowledge.



A Rohingya girl drinking water from a tube well, Photo: Odhikar

- Furthermore, children and women are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking. The Bangladesh Army is controlling the camps while many international NGOs are providing aid. INGOs are providing basic foods such as rice, lentils and oil to each family.
- Rohingyas are at high risk of deteriorating mental health. Very inadequate trauma counselling facilities were seen.

## V- HOW DO REFUGEES SEE THEIR FUTURE?

Odhikar has taken interviews of the survivors. They are traumatised. They cannot sleep well because of horrible nightmare about the violence that happened to them. All the refugees Odhikar has interacted with asked in reply of the question regarding repatriation “why and to whom will we go there?” They don’t want to face similar incidents again.



Rohingyas especially women are living their lives with past nightmare and uncertain future,

Photo: Odhikar

They will return to their country if,

- a. The Myanmar government accept their identity
- b. They are given back their citizenship rights
- c. They want their civil, political, economic and cultural rights to be ensured
- d. They want assurances of safety
- e. They want the perpetrators tried and punished



## **VI– CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

An ‘Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State’ was signed on 23 November 2017 between Bangladesh and Myanmar government, to repatriate Rohingyas to Myanmar. Odhikar urges the Bangladesh government and the international community to put severe pressure and sanctions on the Myanmar government to take necessary steps for establishing peace in the Rakhine state and to give all civil and political rights and recognition to Rohingyas before repatriation. Odhikar believes that the repatriation process should be suspended until the perpetrators are tried, including members of the Myanmar Army, Buddhist criminals and others who were directly or indirectly involved in committing genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar’s Rakhine State; Creating a safe Rakhine state has to be considered for repatriation and the United Nations has to be engaged into the repatriation initiative, in order to avoid conflict with Myanmar.

## ANNEX-1:

These refugees were chosen based on the severity of the violence they had faced; their survival from the massacre; being only member from the family to have survived etc.

### List of the interviewed Rohingya refugees:

SL no.	Name and age	Village name in Myanmar	Types of violence faced/witnessed
1	Dildar Begum (30)	Tulatuli Village	Rape/ mass killing
2	Abdul Karim (19)	Sow Prang Village	Wounded/ mass killing
3	Sayedul Islam (45)	Sow Prang Village	Tortured
4	Mohammad Taker (21)	Sow Prang Village	Wounded/ mass killing
5	Toha (32)	Dumabai village	Wounded/ mass killing
6	Mohammad Siraj (24)	Baggona village	Wounded/ mass killing
7	Rehena Begum (22)	Diyal Toli village	Mass killing
8	Oli Ahammad (28)	Tulatuli Village	Mass killing

### Focus group discussion's participant list:

SL	Name	Identity
1	Ms. Razia Sultana	Rohingya activist
2	Ms. Parvin Akter	HRD
3	Ms. Rokhsana Akter	HRD
4	Mr. Imran Sohel	Journalist
5	Mr. Mohammad Sohel Hossain,	Journalist
6	Mr. Abdullah Mazumdar,	HRD
7	Mr. Majibullah,	HRD
8	Mr. Manjurul Islam	HRD

## **ANNEX-2:**

### **Questionnaire:**

#### **Case Study-**

Interviewer:

Photographer:

Videographer:

Information collection date:      Submission date:

#### **Personal information of victim:**

1. Name, Age, Sex:
2. Profession: (Before and Now)
3. Marital status:
4. Spouse name:
5. Spouse profession: (Before and Now)
6. Father's name:
7. Father's profession: (Before and Now)
8. Mother's name:
9. Mother's profession: (Before and Now)
10. Where did you lived? Spouse's parent's house or own house/ parent's house?
11. Present address:
12. Address in Myanmar:
13. Mobile number:
14. Educational level:
15. Family members and their situation-
  - How many?
  - How many were killed? Their name and identity?
  - How many were taken away? Their name and identity?
  - How many entered Bangladesh? Their name and identity?
16. What kind of violence you faced or witnessed?

#### **Description of the incident and entering Bangladesh-**

17. Incident date?
18. Incident time?

19. Incident place?
20. Who were the attackers? How many and from where they came?
21. Uniform and weapon?
22. How they attacked?
23. Whom they attacked (Name and relationship)?
24. That time, where were you?
25. Who else were with you?
26. Where were the other members of the family?
27. What did you do then?
28. How you escaped?
29. Who were with you?
30. Where did you take shelter (Which village and who's house)?
31. After the attack, where the attacker went?
32. Which border you crossed to enter Bangladesh?
33. How you came?
34. When?
35. Who were with you? (Family members names and identity)
36. Did you pay anything like money/ornaments/anything else?
37. How much and to whom?
38. What were the problems you faced during coming to Bangladesh?
39. Who made the problems?
40. Where did you stay after entering Bangladesh? How long? Who brought you here?
41. What did you bring with you?
42. What kind of property and how much of the property you left in Myanmar?

**Situation of the village in Myanmar-**

43. What is your village name?
44. How many families were living in your village?
45. How many families were your relatives?
46. What was the main profession of the residents?
47. How was the supervision of the military/ government?
48. Were there any list of the residents of the village?
49. Was your name/your family members' names on that list?
50. What were the discrimination between Rohingyas and people from other religion?

51. Who controlled the village?
52. Who were the influential persons of the village? What kind of repression they did on Rohingyas?
53. How is your physical condition?

**Situation in Bangladesh-**

54. What kind of help you have got after coming to Bangladesh?
55. What kind of help you need now?
56. After coming Bangladesh, did you face any repression? If yes, by whom and how?

**Attachment-**

1. Photo- How many?
2. Video- How many?
3. Audio- How many?
4. Others- What and how many?