

## Despite the many generations, multiculturalism fails tragically

Categories : [Commentary](#)

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Most of Burmese emigrants today can be found living in Malaysia and Thailand, said the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in its [report](#) earlier this year.

(An 'emigrant' is defined as out-migrant who has moved away while an 'immigrant' is one who has moved in.)

Malaysia is hosting currently many Burmese ? be they legal workers, PATI (pendatang tanpa izin) and additionally, the Rohingya refugees.

It is estimated that 4.25 million people who were born in Myanmar are presently residing outside their country of birth, said UNFPA. How many Rohingya have melted into Malaysia's shadowlands of undocumented migrants, one wonders?

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Read [here](#)

**150,000 Rohingya in Malaysia — Aljazeera**

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**Burmese official narrative: Rohingya are Bengali**

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Myanmar has a total population of about 51.5 million. Some 3.2 million are living in Rakhine state.

The Rohingya are estimated to be around one third of Rakhine's population going by the most recent Myanmar Population and Housing Census taken in 2014.

"An estimated 1,090,000 people who wished to self-identify as Rohingya were not enumerated in the census," explained the UNFPA. They are a people living in the shadows in Myanmar too.

? *Rohingya cousins dwell in Chittagong, Bangladesh*

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# Chittagong is just Rakhine's land

Rakhine state, where most Rakhine ethnics inhabit is one of the seven states within Myanmar sovereignty. It's situated in country's western part, bordered by Chin state in north, Magway region, Bago region and Irrawaddy region in east, Bay of Bengal in south and neighbored to Bangladesh to west and northwest.

Rakhine people had ruled autonomously in their own aristocracies and their history can be generally divided into seven parts which are Dhanyawaddy age, Waithali age, Lemro age, finally (Myo Haung) Mrauk Oo age - ages of independent Rakhine kingdom - then Konbaung Dynasty established by Boe Daw (King Badone)(1782-1819) after 1782, colonial period under British government after 1886 and independent Burma(Myanmar) after 1948.

Rakhine races reportedly have risen since 3000s BC according to claimed-as-legend history, and Dhanyawaddy dynasty which history describes had erupted in the period contemporaneous to the era of Lord Buddha's arising. Rakhine kings established kingdom on long delta and a number of farmlands between Ganges river and Irrawaddy river. Rakhine kingdom became segregated from Myanmar mainland as it was divided by West Roma mountain range. As Rakhine

kingdoms were stretched to the East Bengal province, Rakhine kings annexed 12 Bengali cities including Chittagong, Panwah, Mauk Thuza, Binga.

The place of current Bangladesh country was just

East Bengal province that had become East Pakistan country when British government gave independence. After that, Bangladesh separated from Pakistan. It means Rakhine ethnics have once owned many parts of current Bangladesh. Among them, Chittagong where many Rakhine ethnics had dwelled was Rakhine territory.

Indian sub-continent and Myanmar(Burma) lost so many original borders when those regained independence from Britain. Eastern part and western part, the lands where most Muslim lived, of India were considered East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Then, East Pakistan metamorphosed into Bangladesh. Additionally, Myanmar map changed despite its independent status.

Nothing's wrong with Myanmar in border dispute cases although it has five neighbors. Myanmar's foreign policy depends on independent, active and peaceful coexistence. Now, Bangladesh's author Zeeshan Khan spurs to chip Myanmar's territory in an article named "A referendum in Rakhine State", an element to damage relation-

ship of two countries.

Butheetaung and Maungdaw belong with Rakhine state, historically, with residence of Rakhine ethnics who had to leave when Bengali, non-indigenous people, from Bangladesh invaded. Therefore, it were just insulting Myanmar territory to hold a referendum for Bengalis to decide whether to separate Butheetaung, Maungdaw, Sittwe from Myanmar and inset them to Chittagong.

It's provocative to Myanmar sovereignty. Instead, it better should let Chittagong join Myanmar. Rakhine ethnics had owned Chittagong for many decades. However, Myanmar upholds neighboring countries' sovereignty without provocative manner. Also, it won't let itself forsake its owned land even for a piece of an inch. Bangladesh regime gives media freedom of expression and the article may be just opinion of Dhaka Tribune's author, vice versa, this one not Myanmar's foreign policy but my opinion.

So, what staying behind conflicts between two societies in Rakhine state can be guessed. It is conspicuous

that some are actively conspiring with politically motivated actions covered by religion and social case, factually invading Myanmar sovereignty by gimmicks of human right, democratic right and destroying stability of republic of union of Myanmar.

For these reasons, we, Thamaga media, urge human right groups, state-run organizations, local organizations to find result by means of following facts in effect to get peaceful coexistence.

- (1) Is freedom of religion banned in Myanmar?
- (2) Are there genocide and abuse happening in Myanmar?
- (3) Is social and sectarian discrimination legal in Myanmar?
- (4) Is legal citizenship banned in Myanmar?
- (5) Is law amendment in a country breaching human right?
- (6) Is protection of mother land provocative?
- (7) Shouldn't everyone have right to preserve tradition and culture of his/her race and country?

Translated by MN

There are 135 'ethnic races' officially listed by the authorities in Myanmar. The Rohingya are not classed among these 135.

Rohingya are viewed by the mainstream communities as Bengali outsiders, i.e. Indian Muslim immigrants who moved into Rakhine from the neighbouring area of what is today Bangladesh. Hundreds of years ago, Bengal was ruled by sultanates.

**[Note:** The borders of modern Bangladesh were established with the partition of Bengal in August 1947. Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan beginning 1947 after independence from the British, and called by its present country name since 1971 following Bangladesh's subsequent independence from Pakistan.]

In Myanmar, 'citizenship by birth' is granted to members of "national ethnic races", for example the dominant ethnic group Bamar, and also the Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Shan and Rakhine, etc. These ethnics are deemed to have been permanently settled in the areas of what is now Myanmar since before 1823.

The year 1823 is selected as the cut-off line because war broke out between Britain and Burma in March 1824, following border clashes in Arakan state (the previous name for Rakhine state). The British won the war and in 1826, the Burmese had sign a peace treaty and cede Arakan - among other territories - to the colonial empire.

Unlike Burma's 135 official 'ethnic races', Rohingya need to apply to become naturalized citizens. Nonetheless, their prospects of citizenship are "significantly narrowed" due to the country's restrictive Citizenship Law.

[https://youtu.be/figpBkA6r\\_o](https://youtu.be/figpBkA6r_o)

## **Rohingya are *de facto* stateless people**

Why is it that Rohingya have been pointedly excluded from citizenship by law even though their families have been living in Myanmar for many generations?

According to the [Kofi Annan report:](#)

"While there has been a Muslim community in Rakhine since before the Burmese invasion, its size increased rapidly during colonial times. British colonial policies to expand rice cultivation in Rakhine required significant labour, a need which was largely filled by Muslim workers from Bengal. While many came on a seasonal basis, some settled down permanently – altering the ethnic and religious mix of the area. From the 1880s to the 1930s, the size of the Muslim community (as part of the total population of the state) seems to have doubled, increasing from about 13 to 25 percent."

The demographic data above was sourced from *Report on the Census of British Burma, Part I: The Enumeration and Compilation of Results, 1881; Census of India 1931, Vol XI: Burma, Part I: Report, 1933.*

The 'Kofi Annan report' - a year in the making - collates the final recommendations by the advisory commission chaired by the respected former UN sec-gen.

Some months into his investigations, Kofi Annan rejected claims that the mass killings in Rakhine amounted to genocide.

<https://twitter.com/BBCNewsAsia/status/806154831010349056>

Findings by the commission was presented last month (Aug 23) to Myanmar state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Myanmar president U Htin Kyaw.

Ethnicity has a "direct impact on the determination of [Myanmar] citizenship", the Kofi Annan report acknowledged.

Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law disenfranchised the Rohingya who are considered as "Muslim workers from Bengal". Through the implementation of this law, Rohingya became 'white card' holders only granted temporary residency.

Since they are not regarded by the Burmese government as indigenous to the land, Rohingya are required to prove that they or their ancestors entered the country prior to 1948.

**[Note:** Burma won its independence from the British in January 1948. The newly independent republic, however, declined to become a member of the Commonwealth.]

Because the Rohingya are viewed as illegal aliens and interlopers, this Muslim minority group is effectively made stateless by the Burmese ruling clique by design.



## Long history of mutual distrust

Rakhine has been wracked by cycles of violence.

As early as 1948, there was a mujahideen rebellion in Arakan (Rakhine) shortly after Myanmar's independence when the Rohingya demanded an autonomous Muslim region in the north of the state.

Inter-communal conflict is a recurring element amid the province's periodic social tensions. In 1978 and 1991, the hostile Burmese military junta pushed more than 200,000 Rohingya to trek as refugees into Bangladesh.

Ethnic conflict between armed combatants took a toll of at least 192 lives (134 Muslims, 58 Rakhine killed) in June and October 2012. Rohingya separatists are accused of harbouring ambitions to secede.

The most recent waves of violence occurred in October 2016, sparked by attacks on Burmese security forces by the Harakat al-Yaqin insurgents, also known as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army ([Arsa](#)).

More killings erupted late last month on the back of the release of Kofi Annan's report.

"What is seen by many internationally as a human rights issue is viewed in Myanmar as one of national sovereignty, and there is widespread support for military operations in northern Rakhine," reported the BBC in its [Sept 6 article](#).

The British broadcaster also said, "Most Burmese view international media coverage as one-sided, putting too much emphasis on the Rohingya, and failing to adequately cover the plight of others in Rakhine who have fled violence in their villages".

Foreign media are quoting a figure of more than a quarter million when referring the number of Rohingya who have fled across the border to Bangladesh over the past couple of weeks.

Nevertheless, it is not Rohingya alone who have been displaced by the sectarian violence. Some 27,000 ethnic Rakhine - Buddhists as well as Hindus - comprise 'internally displaced persons' (IDP) that have also had to be evacuated from their homes.

? *James Gomez, Amnesty International's regional director for southeast Asia and Pacific voices how a common language is vital for integration*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=259y3hDnhs0>

## **Multiculturalism, diversity tore apart Rakhine**

The Rohingya have a different language, culture and religion from the majority Burmese and the majority Rakhine. They live in a parallel society, in fact.

In their madrasahs, Rohingya children are not educated in Myanmar language.

It is untenable that the Rohingya - or for that matter, any minority that is so very different in language, culture and religion - should fail to integrate with the majority population.

<https://twitter.com/CNN/status/907213782295957507>

Although the Burmese government has downplayed the massacres in Rakhine as merely a security response to Muslim "terrorists", Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - see story tweet above - views the situation with grave alarm as ethnic cleansing.

UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee is similarly concerned, [suggesting on Friday](#) (Sept 8) that more than 1,000 people, mostly Rohingya, may already have been killed.

What is undeniable is the Rohingya exodus from Myanmar. With Rohingya villages being razed to the ground, their flight of fear is tantamount to a forced expulsion.

In the worst case scenario, minorities can be expelled even from the land of their birth. If anything, Rakhine proves that too much diversity is a dangerous. There is nothing at all to hold such a diverse society together.