

The Subir & Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies

at the Institute for South Asia Studies
University of California at Berkeley

South Asia Research Notes

Fall 2020

A UC BERKELEY CONFERENCE ON THE ROHINGYA

BEYOND THE CRISIS NARRATIVE: ROHINGYA STATELESSNESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

A summary report by

Yoshika Crider

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Co-organizer, Rohingya Working Group
University of California, Berkeley



Rohingya refugees walk towards the Balukhali refugee camp after crossing the border in Bangladesh's Ukhia district, on November 2, 2017. Photo: Dibyangshu Sarkar/AFP

Military operations launched by Myanmar's armed forces on August 25, 2017 initiated the desperate flight of over 700,000 Rohingya across the border into Bangladesh. The August incident represented a condensed and especially violent manifestation of a much longer history, of a sustained and highly systematic campaign of persecution not just by the army, but by other state and non-state actors

as well. The genocidal violence and savagery, along with the sheer scale of displacement forced global attention to the Myanmar state's long-term efforts to excise the Rohingya from the body politic.

What does the current impasse mean for those trapped indefinitely inside the Bangladeshi camps? What kinds of opportunities, including emergent forms of criminality and illegality, are opened up by the emergence of camps? What are the environmental costs and who bears them? How do the nation's already precarious ethnic and religious minorities contend with the new reality?

On February 7, 2020, the Chowdhury Center invited leading scholars, activists, and members of the community to Berkeley for a one day conference to a) Disentangle the various myths and narratives around Rohingya identity and claims to Myanmar citizenship, especially in relation to Bengali/Bangladeshi identity; b) Analyze the multilayered and often contradictory implications — for the Bangladeshi state, transnational actors, and various communities within its borders — of living in/hosting what is now apparently the world's largest refugee camp; and c) Evaluate the possibilities for moving forward, including Bangladeshi efforts to take the issue to the ICC.

This report is a summary of the conference proceedings.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

IN ADDITION TO THE ONE-DAY CONFERENCE, THE CHOWDHURY CENTER AND UC BERKELEY'S ROHINGYA WORKING GROUP ORGANIZED TWO MORE EVENTS DEALING WITH THE ROHINGYA ISSUE IN THE SPRING SEMESTER OF 2020.

- FEBRUARY 6, 2020: A SCREENING OF YUSUF ZINE'S *I AM ROHINGYA: A GENOCIDE IN FOUR ACTS*, A DOCUMENTARY ON THE JOURNEY OF FOURTEEN ROHINGYA YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES' ESCAPE FROM BURMA.
- FEBRUARY 10, 2020: A TEAM OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING DR. SANCHITA B. SAXENA, SAMIRA SIDDIQUE, SHIREEN HUQ, YASMIN ULLAH, PROF. ALI RIAZ, MABRUR AHMED, RAHIMA BEGUM & RICK SPEES, AND GOLAM M. MATHBOR ADDRESSED CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON DC OFFERING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND GROUND UPDATES ON THE ROHINGYA AND HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

BEYOND THE CRISIS NARRATIVE ROHINGYA STATELESSNESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

Tuesday, February 7, 2020

The Institute for South Asia Studies, 10 Stephens Hall, UC Berkeley

*video recordings of talks, abstracts of papers presented, and speaker information
at southasia.berkeley.edu/beyond-crisis-narrative*

AGENDA

OPENING REMARKS

Sanchita Saxena, Director, Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, UC Berkeley
Rick Spees, Executive Director, CAORC

STATELESSNESS & THE POLITICS OF THE NATION

Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science, Colgate University (Via Skype)
Steve Ross, Senior Advisor and Program Director, Richardson Center for Global Engagement
Ali Riaz, Professor Political Science, Illinois State University
Patrick DeSutter, PhD Student, Anthropology, UC Berkeley
Chair: Dina Siddiqi, Clinical Associate Professor, Liberal Studies, NYU

VIOLENCE & IDENTITY

Shireen Huq, Founder, Narippokho
Rahima Begum, Co-Director, Restless Beings
Yasmin Ullah, President, Rohingya Human Rights Network
Chair: Khatharya Um, Professor, Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ROHINGYA CAMPS

Rohini Haar, Lecturer, Epidemiology & Research Fellow, Human Rights Center, UC Berkeley
Ruhul Abid, Associate Professor, Brown University Medical School
Christopher LeBoa, Researcher, Department of Epidemiology, Stanford University
Chair: Lawrence Cohen, Professor, Medical Anthropology, UC Berkeley

DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Ashley Toombs, Director of External Affairs, BRAC USA
Samira Siddique, PhD Student, Energy and Resources Group, UC Berkeley
Sharif Mukul, Research Fellow, Tropical Forests and People Research
Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia
Mabrur Ahmed, Director, Restless Beings
Chair: Isha Ray, Associate Professor, Energy and Resources Group, UC Berkeley

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Hannah Beech, Southeast Asia Bureau Chief, The New York Times

CONFERENCE SPONSORS

The Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, the Institute for South Asia Studies,
the Center of American Overseas Research Centers, and the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS



Ruhul Abid, Associate Professor, Brown University Alpert Medical School



Mabrrur Ahmed, Founder and Director of Restless Beings



Hannah Beech, Southeast Asia Bureau Chief for The New York Times



Rahima Begum, Artist, Researcher and Founding Director, Restless Beings



Lawrence Cohen Professor of Anthropology, UC Berkeley



Patrick DeSutter, PhD Student, Anthropology, UC Berkeley



Rohini J. Haar, Lecturer of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, UC Berkeley



Shireen Huq, Founder Narippokho



Christopher LeBoa, Researcher, Department of Epidemiology, Stanford University



Sharif Mukul, Research Fellow, Tropical Forests and People Research Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia



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Ali Riaz, Professor, Department of Politics and Government, Illinois State University



Steve Ross, Senior Advisor and Program Director at the Richardson Center for Global Engagement



Sanchita Saxena, Director, Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, UC Berkeley



Dina Siddiqi, Clinical Associate Professor, NYU



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Richard Spees, Executive Director, CAORC



Ashley Toombs, Director of External Affairs, BRAC USA



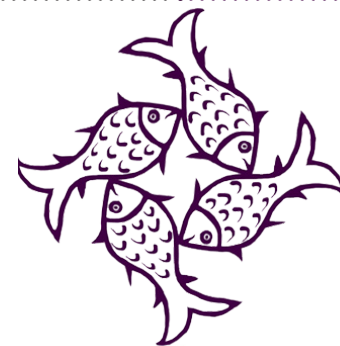
Yasmin Ullah, Research Coordinator, Rohingya Human Rights Network



Khatharya Um, Associate Professor of Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies, Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley



Yusuf Zine, actor and director.



Panel I

STATELESSNESS & THE POLITICS OF THE NATION

- *Chair: Prof. Dina Siddiqi, Clinical Associate Professor, Liberal Studies, NYU*
- **Panelists:**
 - *Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science, Colgate University*
 - *Patrick DeSutter, PhD student, Anthropology, UC Berkeley*
 - *Prof Ali Riaz, Professor of Political Science, Illinois State University*
 - *Steve Ross, Senior Advisor and Program Director, Richardson Center for Global Development*

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

NAVINE MURSHID: The Rohingya are in a “no man’s land” with no legal claims. The state of “exception” here is the declaration of statelessness by the sovereign. Furthermore, the Rakhine versus Rohingya conflict becomes a global conflict in an Islamophobic world, a conflict of Buddhists versus Muslims. In this discourse, the Rohingya can easily be dismissed as terrorists. In this crisis, the question is whether other states are willing to take on the responsibility of development and market access for these “stateless”.

Bangladesh has taken on a particularly humanitarian role compared to India or other countries, but, it only appears humane because our understanding of refugees is that they should have limited rights, at least less than that of citizens. Refugee camps are thus “demarcated zones of exception” where mobility is limited. We should be using the standards of the rights of citizens to hold Bangladesh to a higher standard. The Rohingya refugees should have freedom of movement and the ability to have basic human rights. Ultimately, citizenship in a nation state is not a guarantor of economic freedom, nor total freedom, so ensuring freedom requires us to look beyond the nation state.

STEVE ROSS: The likelihood of progress in Myanmar in the short term is unlikely at best unless a nation like China, a staunch ally of Myanmar, speaks up. Around

half a million Rohingya remain in Rakhine, without access to services, and access to Rakhine is blocked to aid agencies and the media. They also have the longest running internet ban in the world. All ASEAN countries, except Malaysia, continue to invest in Myanmar. Japan and South Korea are reluctant to speak out, and India has its own Hindu nationalist plan, so it also will not speak out. Unfortunately, the national elections that are expected at the end of 2020 are likely to increase conflict by the Arakhine army. In terms of a path forward, historically in the 1970s and 1990s, Bangladesh agreed to a repatriation agreement with Myanmar. But, they did not provide rights so as to not add pull factors. Bangladesh is not party to the refugee convention, so Rohingya have not formally been given access to the right to work. Bangladesh has taken a bit more of an antagonistic approach to Myanmar and has sought to internationalize the issue. However, in large part, the Rohingya themselves are absent from the humanitarian and development conversations.

ALI RIAZ: There should be a boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement against Myanmar. There are geopolitical and geostrategic considerations relevant to the Rohingya crisis. For example, Myanmar is the land bridge between South and Southeast Asia. There is a large Chinese presence in Myanmar, with lots of infrastructural and energy projects there. Foreign direct investment is high, with Singapore, China, and Thailand all significant investors. Bangladesh made an important mistake in 2017 in signing the bilateral agreement with China and India on the Rohingya, and Bangladesh should join The Gambia’s court case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Myanmar of genocide.

PATRICK DESUTTER: “The presence of the Rohingya in Bangladesh bring together humanitarian and climate narrative through the framing of “crisis.” It is significant that it is called the “Rohingya” crisis and not the “Myanmar” crisis. Meshing humanitarian discourse with environmental discourse comes to a head in the plan to relocate the Rohingya to Bhashan Char, an isolated island in the Bay of Bengal. This highlights the relationship between the state and the natural environment. In classical political theory, the earth system has been

taken for granted. But the crisis today acts as a linking mechanism between the state and the earth. In establishing infrastructure on this island, new technologies for climate adaptation are being developed. For example, the Bangladesh government, along with China and the UK, has built a three meter high embankment to guard against the rising tide. In the planning of this island, refugees



From Left: Prof. Dina Siddiqi, Patrick DeSutter, Prof. Ali Riaz, Steve Ross. Prof. Navine Murshid, seen on the screen on the wall, made her presentation via Skype.

are being used as the guinea pigs on the frontlines of climate change.

GENERAL COMMENTS

DINA SIDDIQI: This panel began with the broad question, what is a crisis? Who is a crisis for and when does it begin? It is a problematic framing, a crisis from a Euro-American gaze. In the Rohingya crisis, the process of becoming stateless was actually a “legal” process. The process of turning citizens into stateless people is not unique to the Rohingya crisis, however. It is very relevant to crises in Syria and Assam.

Common themes among the panelists included failure of the nation state and how resorting to a crisis narrative have been the predominant way to think about the Rohingya issue. This brings up a number of questions. For example, how are we to think about the rights for refugees versus citizens within this system? Who is considered worthy of saving? How do we think of the role of non-state actors, such as the United Nations? In all of this discussion, commerce and investment appear very important context. A call for a boycott might seem effective when dealing with that aspect.

DISCUSSION

During the discussion, Riaz noted that his recommendation for a BDS movement is motivated by the fact that the incidence of war crimes is clear. Ross noted that there is a need to shift investment structures so as not to incentivize commerce and investment supporting regimes that commit atrocities. Murshid noted that the UN has not been Bangladesh’s friend, and is viewing settlement in Bangladesh as a durable solution to the Rohingya situation. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has not designated the conflict as genocide. From the audience, it was noted that there actually has been a boycott, mostly focused on the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, to pressure Japan to take action. Their role has been quite contrary to the usual relationship it has with the US and Europe in regards to this issue, with a role of mostly inaction. As context, it was noted from the audience that we need to remember that many people in Bangladesh live in equally or more precarious environments than Bhashan Char.

The role of Facebook in the Rohingya genocide, and whether there is a way to push for changes in privacy.

Ross noted that Facebook was platform for amplifying hate speech, but it was reflective of a broader set of problems and not a root cause. In a discussion of tourism as a way to protest, it was noted that there has been a decrease in Western tourism, but an increase in Asian tourism in Myanmar.

The refugee convention

There was general agreement that there was some cynicism around it, and that Bangladesh is following the lead of other countries in the region. Becoming a signatory would compel the government to take certain steps, perhaps leading Rohingya to stay longer.

Climate adaptation

DeSutter: It is important to think about Bhashan Char as a climate issue, even if we are not explicitly discussing it in such terms. The same companies are working on climate change adaptation technologies on islands in the South China Sea and in the United Arab Emirates.

What are international organizations doing to make the long-term situation better?

Ross noted that, from a central government perspective, you don’t want there to be conflicts or security challenges from the Rohingya or host communities. In terms of NGOs and aid agencies, in the joint response plans going back to 2018, around a quarter of funding was meant to go toward affected Bangladeshi host communities. There is perhaps some sense among communities in Cox’s Bazaar that they are left out, because it is the Bangladeshis in Dhaka and Chittagong who are getting jobs.



From Left: Prof. Ali Riaz, Patrick DeSutter, Steve Ross, and Prof. Dina Siddiqi.

Panel II

VIOLENCE & IDENTITY

- *Chair: Prof. Khatharya Um, Professor, South and Southeast Asian Studies and Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley*
- **Panelists:**
 - *Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science, Colgate University*
 - *Shireen Huq, Founder, Narippokho*
 - *Rahima Begum, Co-Director, Restless Beings*
 - *Yasmin Ullah, President, Rohingya Human Rights Network*

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

SHIREEN HUQ: Narippokho is a women's rights organization established in 1983, and it serves as a Bangladesh civil society platform for justice for the Rohingya. Much of her work has been telling the stories of Rohingya women who experienced sexual violence. Huq spoke of how host communities were feeling besieged by the huge organization that has emerged during the crisis, and the international community must be more forthcoming in putting pressure on Myanmar. The U.S., for example, could certainly stand with Canada and the Netherlands and support the Gambian genocide case against Myanmar. **It is important for non-Muslim countries to stand by Gambia, in order to resist the narrative that a small Buddhist country is being overwhelmed by a Muslim coalition.** Local people are upset because they are not being recognized for the fact that they took care of these people and, now that it has become an international crisis, they are entirely left out of the discussion about the operation. Some frustration may be taken out on the Rohingya, but not that much. There is also fear that Rohingya are a very socially conservative population, sympathetic toward Islamic extremism. This is a fear expressed by the question, "Who are these people we are housing and what are

they bringing with them?" There are attempts to counter creeping intolerance, and it is important to remember that Bangladesh, at its birth, had 10 million refugees sheltered by India and some even by Myanmar. Donor fatigue is driving the turn in Bangladesh to domestic disaster management, to localization. High schoolers in Bangladesh are being hired as interpreters by international NGOs, so there is potential for a lost generation outside the camps too, with these students dropping out of school. The government mandates that all NGOs need to spend at least 30% of their resources on the local population, but the local community would rather have inclusion in the operation than that 30%.

RAHIMA BEGUM: Genocidal rape is intended to dehumanize the community. It destroys structures of families and communities. The acts are strategies designed to annihilate a community. The global community saw this tactic in the Rwandan Genocides. It is often an invisible strategy, though not always, and suffering does not stop at the act itself. **When the victim of rape is labeled a pariah by their own family, this might be considered a form of second rape. Sexual violence is also used to attack the lineage of a group.** The Bangladesh government declared women who were raped in the 1971 Liberation War as birangona, or war heroines. In Myanmar, the military carried out widespread sexual violence, designed to control and spread fear among villages. More than half of victims are under 18, and their bodies have been mutilated. Rohingya women are doubly marginalized. Restless Beings has interviewed thousands of women to compile their stories. Genocidal rape is being used as a tool for political control; it comes with instruction and it is state sanctioned. Bodies were used as vessels through which the Burmese army attacked the core of Rohingya identity. And despite the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi claimed rape reports were fake accounts, sexual violence is and was used as a tactical strategy.

YASMIN ULLAH: **As a Rohingya, "I'm here to be a physical testament that there is hope and it is up to us to change the story of Rohingya to be a more vibrant and heartening one."** I grew up in Thailand, where my family and I were considered illegal immigrants; I existed not as a person but as an illegal alien. During a major flood, my mother, a Rohingya woman, had no time to panic. To survive, we had to rely on ourselves. I internalized her struggles and her inability to be vulnerable; the end of that road is exhaustion and that leads to a feeling of helplessness, something that Rohingya children are learning in their formative years. Genocidal rape forces women to carve deep within their souls; they watch their male family members killed and they are kept alive to become the carrier of the trauma to pass along to the next generations. In this way, fear was interwoven into the very core of our identity, and fear becomes the essence of who we are. When our sense of self is destroyed by way of fear and intimidation, having to flee becomes our natural response; flight became the only solution to the uncertainty of life and death. Neoliberalization leads to placing hope for democracy in one person, Aung San Suu Kyi. Among the Rohingya, PTSD is going undiagnosed, with long-term consequences. Trauma alters the brain in a physical sense. The word "post" in PTSD refers to a privilege, a luxury for the Rohingya. It is important to provide the community with the resources to move past the crisis itself.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Trauma and violence have been characteristics of this crisis. We should not stop looking at refugees as individuals to be rescued, but we should also look at the ways that communities transmit memories and culture despite the violence they experience. There is a refugee-tude, or a consciousness that remains despite the removal of the label of refugee. These individuals were forcibly displaced, and there

is a continued loss of language. Their relationship with their land and community forms to basis of shared knowledge and shared memory.

DISCUSSION (IN Q&A FORMAT)

Is the domestic violence unprecedented in magnitude?

Huq: It is impossible to get figures. One group is currently working with 100 women, but sexual violence is under-reported in Bangladesh, generally, so the fact that they are receiving a lot of complaints suggests how significant this problem is. There are accounts of rape in the camps, especially when women go to the toilets at night. The government has restrictions, not allowing any NGO workers to stay after 4 p.m.; but after this time, the camps become another world, where there are no longer any protections. The situation is such that we cannot get hold of exact information. We see cases of Rohingya men demanding to exercise greater control of the women and girls by claiming that is part of their culture. There is a system of majhis, a lumpen category of people who have power and are brokers of resources.

What would be a culturally appropriate intervention?

Begum: Talk therapy, for example, is not something that is encouraged culturally. The organization Restless Beings operates between academia and humanitarian work. "We don't want to impose what we in the west see as the correct kind of therapy." So, the strategy for therapy starts with, what do they need according to their own understandings? The wives of the majhis, for example, are powerful figures for women and girls, and are helpful for networking and communication. In these camps, there are mothers and grandmothers whose daughters have not seen the outside world. Art therapy is something that is working well. The women need a reason to move forward, and that is the hardest part of the work. There is relief arriving in Bangladesh, but there are other problems they face in the camps. Isolation. Parentless children are becoming sexual objects. We have to be aware of trafficking routes. Women are organizing themselves differently after 5 p.m. and communicate and try to support one another. The Yaba drug trade and sex trafficking are the two biggest social ills.

With relation to minorities, what about the politics of inclusion and exclusion? Burma is trying to include all of these ethnic minorities other than the Rohingya? Rohingya violence and rapes are an effort to change the blood? The extraordinary violence suggests that something else is going on beyond some kind of cynical attempt to control resources, commerce, etc.

It is an attempt to remake the community into the self and also to extinguish the community. It is about mutilation and the destruction of the possibility of the biological continuation of the community. It is the capture of the "beautiful women" to be sex slaves for the Burmese army. With the Rohingya, the question is why the sexual violence is so multifaceted and aimed at different strategies, for example fear, genocide, or slavery. It is not just to discontinue the lineage but also to brand, to create scars and make them identifiable.

What constructive steps can we take from here?

We can put pressure on the U.S. government to support the Gambian genocide case. There is a Burma Bill in the US senate. We can participate in the boycott. Boycott, divest, and sanction. Keep in mind also that the Rohingya men and the Rohingya Hindu women have also been raped.



From Left: Shireen Huq, Prof. Khatharya Um, Yasmin Ullah, Rahima Begum.

Panel III

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ROHINGYA CAMPS

- *Chair: Lawrence Cohen, Professor, Medical Anthropology, UC Berkeley*
- **Panelists:**
 - *Rohini Haar, Lecturer, Epidemiology & Research Fellow, Human Rights Center, UC Berkeley*
 - *Ruhul Abid, Associate Professor, Brown University Medical School*
 - *Chris LeBoa, Researcher, Department of Epidemiology, Stanford University*

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

ROHINI HAAR: Public health and medicine must be integrated into the human rights framework, and what we call various things,

our language, matters. There are ongoing issues that must be dealt with on the health side. We can start with some definitions. Crimes against humanity must include widespread of systematic attack. Genocide is the specific intent to destroy. The primary research goals during field investigations with Physicians for Human Rights are to describe and document what happened, to assess whether there was consistency in the patterns, and whether this was a crime. This work required use of the Istanbul Protocol, a protocol on how to do a medical or forensic evaluation on survivors of torture, trauma, abuse (e.g., how do you know that something is a gunshot wound versus a stab wound). It is also used when people seek asylum in the U.S. For this particular study, we interviewed approximately 114 people in Rohingya refugee camps with physical scars of trauma from events in Myanmar. These individuals came from all across Rakhine state, which indicates that the violence is widespread and systematic. Respondents were across age groups, and they reported purposeful destruction of homes, villages, livelihoods, and delay or denial of medical treatment. Physical exams showed evidence of violence and physical torture, secondary injuries

(e.g., blast trauma and hearing loss), burn injuries, injuries from sexual violence, psychological sequela of surviving violent trauma, and around 40% suffered permanent disabilities, with a huge percent requiring ongoing medical care. **We concluded that the medical evidence supports systematic and widespread attacks. It is hard to do something that widespread without top-down orders; these patterns of injury suggest top-down orders with specific intent. The medical evidence supports referral of Myanmar's military to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and genocide.** Additionally, there were land mine injuries when people were crossing the border. U.S. policy is easing the use of land mines. All of this methods and results of this study are written up in a paper.

RUHUL ABID: The Rohingya are a people without a country and without healthcare. There is a high disease burden, however, and we know what we need to do and what can be done. HAEFA, a US based NGO, was founded in 2012 primarily to provide healthcare to garment factory workers in Bangladesh. In 2017, however, the group decided to try to apply the EMR system developed for the garment factories to the refugee camps, but, they needed to solve the problem of lack of access to electricity and the internet. HAEFA has established two medical centers for the Rohingya since October 9, 2017. **The Rohingya were a people who didn't exist in the Myanmar healthcare system. Given the situation, the Bangladesh government and international organizations did a great job to prevent several epidemics.** Think of 500,000 people entering Boston without any vaccinations. This is the picture. There were many immediate needs. There are children without parents, young children, pregnant women, and over half of women of reproductive age had been assaulted. In the camps, there have been 32,000 births since 2018. It's important to also remember that healthcare and hygiene is as important as food and shelter. HAEFA has set up a paperless electronic medical records system in the camps using solar powered WiFi routers, with a solar panel and car battery set-up. This is a HIPAA-compliant process. They had started fingerprinting for identification, but they stopped this due to some privacy concerns. 60,000 patients have been treated since the medical centers were constructed. From the data they have, women in the camps clearly have a higher burden of hypertension and diabetes. Overall, their impact has been 130,000 patient visits.

CHRIS LEOA: I will describe a project in the Kutupalong camp, examining the human and environmental costs and benefits of firewood versus liquid propane for cooking in the Bangladesh Rohingya camps. The refugees in the camps receive shelter, rice and lentils, and pots, but nothing to cook with; this leads to an obvious problem. **The issue of deforestation blamed on the Rohingya is a direct result of the lack of cooking fuel provided in order to cook. They have no other source of cooking fuel or income to purchase fuel.** We identified two main research questions, in partnership with the UNHCR and IOM. First, what is the cost-effectiveness of LPG distribution in the Rohingya refugee camps, given the human, environmental, and economic costs and benefits? Second, what are the opportunities and barriers for effective distribution and uptake of LPG in the Rohingya refugee camps? One problem of clean cook stove interventions in general is low uptake, fuel preferences, and stove stacking. We are interested in outcomes related to human health and well being, the health of the environment, and implementation, but focus today on indoor air pollution, harassment while collecting fuel, and deforestation. The study design was non-randomized, and we conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups among households who do and do not have LPG. We quantified the deforestation around the camps from 2017-2019, and we found that people are using plastic as a fuel to cook when wood is not available. This

adversely affects physical and mental health. We are seeing air quality inside households exceeds by 25 times the thresholds for WHO safety recommendations for PM 2.5. And we found that, while men primarily collect firewood, they were often asked to provide bribes of rice or lentils to the host community when crossing blockades to go collect firewood.

DISCUSSION (IN Q&A FORMAT)

Comments on trauma and memory?

Haar: Traumatic events can jar your memory in ways that are unexpected. When we study violence and trauma, lack of precision and confusion is completely expected. We could expect that, in places with limited resources, power and privilege of researchers coming in, there could be issues with incentives to speak. With physician examinations, the scars are obvious, but with psychological evaluations, the results often get questioned more. These issues are becoming more familiar to people though.

Comments on public health progress?

Abid: Bangladesh is very competent when it comes to disaster management, and the public health progress there has been great. That knowledge could be utilized in this crisis. There are joint agreements and cooperation groups set up to coordinate in the groups, so there are attempts, but it is slow. If there was some digital inter-cooperation with records, this would help, but still there is not coordination on EMR. Still, HAEFA is the only organization with effective EMR.

Why was fuel never covered in the imaginary of the camp administration?

Abid: Part of the project is to better understand why donors are putting money into LPGs and what info they need. There is an ongoing question as to whether the government of Bangladesh even want LPG going into the camps going forward.

Has there been serious consideration to exploring solar as a source of energy?

LeBoa: Solar cooking technology isn't as developed for this purpose.

How does the EMR program deal with concerns about tracking and EMR?

Abid: Rohingya didn't have a problem with fingerprinting, but UNHCR had an issue. HAEFA gives a patient ID card with a barcode. UNHCR gave an ID card for benefits. (A Rohingya FDMN card in the camp.) WHO is conducting vaccination campaigns and gave a paper card – we don't have the technology to tie that to the UNHCR card.

In some instances rape is not visible on the body. Then, what counts as evidence?

Haar: Lack of physical evidence does not prove the negative, and this is an important message across this research.

Would you be able to use the data in the same way if it wasn't a confined group?

Abid: HAEFA works with the Ministry of Health, so all the data belong to the Bangladesh government. Use of data requires permission from the Bangladesh government, the UNHCR, and IOM.

LeBoa: The researchers are taking care to ensure proper collection and use of data, especially with at-risk and captive populations.

How are chronic diseases being dealt with?

They are being monitored through the EMR system.



From Left: Chris LeBoa, Ruhul Abid, Prof. Lawrence Cohen, Rohini Haar.

Panel IV

DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

- *Chair: Isha Ray, Professor, Energy & Resources Group, UC Berkeley*
- **Panelists:**
 - *Ashley Toombs, Director of External Affairs, BRAC USA*
 - *Samira Siddique, PhD student, Energy & Resources Group, UC Berkeley*
 - *Sharif Mukul, Research Fellow, Tropical Forests and People Research Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast*
 - *Mabrur Ahmed, Director, Restless Beings*

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

ASHLEY TOOMBS: BRAC reaches 100 million people and employs 100,000 staff members globally. We began our Rohingya

response in 2017 with life-saving measures, and we now have programs on the environment and disaster risk reduction. BRAC prioritizes relocating high-risk households, with structural reinforcement, WASH, and community awareness under the disaster risk reduction programs. BRAC has a role in the development sector that is both local and long term. It has succeeded because it is a Bangladesh organization, with long-term experience with the Rohingya community. For example, there was a massive campaign to construct latrines before the monsoon, but many organizations ran out of the cement rings for the pits. Because BRAC has relationships all over Bangladesh, they were able to get more supplies from across the country and assist other organizations who needed those supplies as well. BRAC has been really successful with efforts related to local host engagement.

SAMIRA SIDDIQUE: Development is politically ambiguous when it comes to stateless people. Worldwide, 70.8 million people are displaced, with about a third considered refugees. Refugee camps last, on average, 26 years, yet they

are constructed as temporary settlements by aid agencies. The Rohingya have been in Bangladesh since at least the 1970s. Now Bangladesh hosts the largest refugee camp in the world. Existing guides designate stateless individuals as “in transit” until voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement. “Of the state” individuals are under states that have as a guide the Sustainable Development Goals. Neither of these guides is sufficient for dealing with sustainable development for the stateless. So what does development mean without state citizenship? I conducted 50+ interviews with various stakeholders in the Rohingya camps, and did participation observation of planning meetings across sectors. There is an interest transition taking place, a transition from emergency relief to development, but, there is some tension here. Emergency relief focuses on minimal investment, repeat aid services, and biological needs. Development focuses on millions in investment, experiments, and social needs. Things that have historically never been invested in before are now getting investment, for example solar grids. There are entirely new experiments taking place, for example, bit coins for refugees, or putting refugees on the frontline of climate change. There are examples of the ambiguities that can exist when these tensions exist; for example, the internet being shut off in the Rohingya camps by the Bangladesh government. There are wire fences being constructed around the camps. There are calls by Rohingya for a more active role in running the camps in which they are living. It is clear that new development paradigms are necessary for stateless people. The existing development paradigms are insufficient if we have the long-term development of the Rohingya in mind.

SHARIF MUKUL: The environment is on the frontline in this conflict. Related to one of the topics on this panel, there is an issue of people reselling their LPG and continuing to use wood fuel. They’ve relocated elephants. The region is ecologically important – there are three ecologically critical areas and two protected wildlife areas. Activities are having an impact on the environment, including land clearing for setting up camps/shelters, firewood collection, illegal hunting and poaching and fishing, construction and operation of water wells (putting pressure on groundwater) and latrines, solid waste generation and litter, and transport operations for delivering goods and services to the camps. Activities related to the camps have caused a loss of approximately 2500 hectares of forest, mostly due to firewood collection by the Rohingya and host communities. Critical biodiversity areas are under stress. The land that the camps are on were owned by the government forest department, but they have been reluctant to get involved, assuming that NGOs are intervening on these issues. There are many management challenges, including coordination among different sectors and agencies, sustainable financing, conflict management between host and refugee communities, and political commitment. Potential solutions include fuel wood plantation using native and fast growing species, creating wildlife corridors, improving watershed management, and land stabilization.

MABRUR AHMED: Many development related words are problematic, but we use them nonetheless. For the Rohingya, the idea of normality lies heavily on their legal status. They are neither citizens in Burma nor refugees in Bangladesh; this restricts what is possible for a “normal” life. With normality comes dignity, something that development agencies are trying to create. When asked about where they preferred their life, 82% of Rohingya respondents said they wanted to go back to Burma, even though they were not persecuted on a daily basis in Bangladesh as they were in Burma. The organization Restless Beings

conducted their work in 2017-2019 in Bangladesh; they have looked at changes over time. One of their findings is that things haven't changed much. For example, almost every single day, they've been eating rice, lentils, and basic vegetables for three years. We need to appreciate seriously the fact that Rohingya are human beings with daily struggles; is it easy when looking at the data to begin to think of Rohingya as subjects. Much of the original infrastructure had to be rebuilt; for example water points were too shallow and latrines were at too low capacity. Much of what has been provided by aid organizations ends up being resold in Cox Bazaar, which indicates there is a lack of listening to the Rohingya to understand what they need. For example, dignity kits for Rohingya women often include tampons, but Rohingya women don't use tampons. This indicates a lack of listening to what the Rohingya want. We need to stop hyping up decisions that have hugely problematic decisions underlying them. For example, an education program being implemented soon is a trial that will be implemented by IOM and is a Burmese education program. Bhasan Char is not viable. Restless Beings is the organization that took the photos of Bhasan Char that were published in the Guardian a couple years ago.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Isha Ray: One theme that ran throughout the day is to ask, "what is normal?" And much of that is one the state can answer since development activities are the responsibility of the state. So, when there is no state, this question becomes very difficult. These talks also cause us to question, what is the hierarchy of needs? The extent to which the absolute bare minimum, such as food and shelter, are enough, has been put into question across some of these talks. It is important for us to see in the popular press, people like the Rohingya can be posed as being the reason for outcomes like deforestation. It is easy to draw a false causal link, and this could have consequences. .

DISCUSSION (IN Q&A FORMAT)

when we call them Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals, when we could just call them Rohingya? Is it normal for us to deny the identity of a people?

What is the impact of statelessness on whether or not someone is human?

Ahmed: An individual decides whether their treatment is humane. Relative to what they escaped, Rohingya would probably say their treatment in refugee camps is humane. This does not mean this is what we should consider humane treatment.

Siddique: Compared to development as a regime, a humanitarianism regime entails a power dynamic that doesn't exist as explicitly in development. In humanitarianism, there is always a savior that provides something to someone on the other end.

Toombs: BRAC has a program called the ultra poor graduation initiative, which identifies the ultra poor and provides them with a suite of services and support. This program has been studied in various RCTS and has been applied in over 40 countries all over the world. We cannot provide this program in the camps because of livelihood restrictions in the camps. This initiative includes aspects about hope, because when someone becomes convinced that there is hope for a better life, their decision-making can be very different.

On the environment:

The hope with the environmental issues is that this will bring government attention to environmentally friendly development.



From Left: Mabrur Ahmed, Ashley Toombs, Sharif Mukul, Prof. Isha Ray, Samira Siddiqui.

On donors:

The emphasis on ROI by donors creates a maze of inefficient incentives.

On Aung San Suu Kyi:

Ahmed: Her father was a general, and she is a stalwart of that Army. The ICJ can't do anything if it's not genocide. Crimes against humanity would be referred to a different court.

On the development discussion:

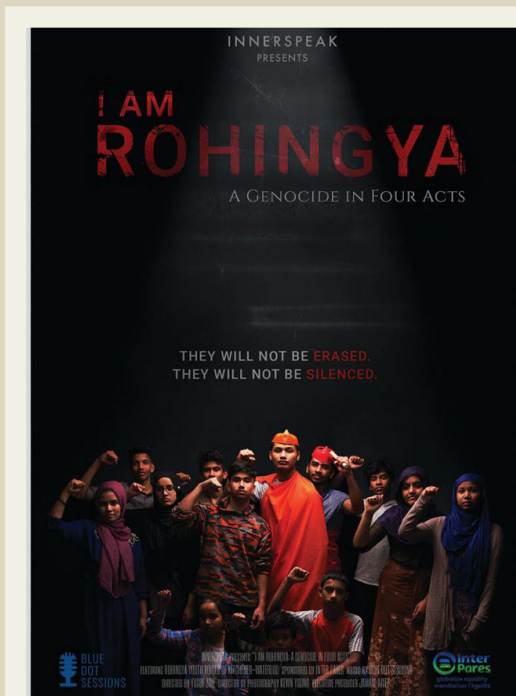
Siddique: The transition from "emergency" discussion to a longer term "development" discussion in the camps happened very fast. It's not necessarily a difference in action than in other camps, but maybe the language being used is different. Perhaps because the Bangladesh government doesn't want development to happen? Or because the camps now are the largest in the world? Or because there was more of a push to make use of the development expertise in Bangladesh?

On needs:

We need to understand better the needs of the Rohingya. For example, we see reselling of LPG, which may be a totally expected result in the context of the Rohingya daily life and needs.

Ahmed: Ultimately, we need to bring the Rohingya to the table. Ultimately, every table needs to be populated with the Rohingya. Discussions about repatriation, and about the camps... beyond just a photo opportunity. Small things collectively create pressure.

Mukul: There is some sense that there is not enough aid money coming for environment work, by people like the forest ministry. There is also concern about involving Rohingya in forest activities because there is concern they will stay.



PRE-CONFERENCE SCREENING OF
I AM ROHINGYA

A Genocide in Four Acts. With Director, Yusuf Zine present

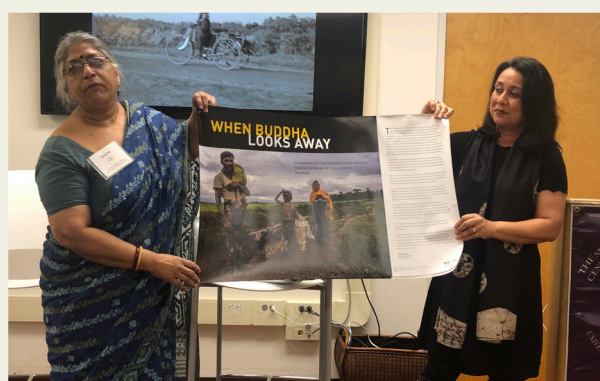


KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
HANNAH BEECH

Southeast Asia Bureau Chief, The New York Times



From Left: Prof. Munis D. Faruqi, Sanchita Saxena, Yusuf Zine, Rick Spees.



From Left: Shireen Huq with Sanchita Saxena with a poster of a photograph by Shahidul Alam.



Hanna Beech delivering her keynote address



Conference participants address Congress



The conference participants during the reception

The Subir & Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, at the Institute for South Asia Studies (ISAS) at UC Berkeley champions the study of Bangladesh's cultures, peoples and history. The first of its kind in the US, the Center's mission is to create an innovative model combining research, scholarships, the promotion of art and culture, and the building of ties between institutions in Bangladesh and the University of California.

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A View of one of Rohingya Refugees' camp settlements. Image credit Food Security Cluster

THE ROHINGYA WORKING GROUP

Hosted by the Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, the Rohingya Working Group at UC Berkeley invites students, researchers, and practitioners to develop ideas and collaborations to further our collective work related to the Rohingya crisis. All added members are given access to a common Google folder to share research, resources, and any other materials that may be helpful to others in the group.

To join please sign up by going to CHOWDHURYCENTER.BERKELEY.EDU/WORKING-GROUPS

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