

# Review of Human Crisis in Myanmar

Presented by  
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# Scheme of Presentation

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- Muslims in Myanmar
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# Profile of Myanmar

- Burma, renamed by military junta in 1989 as Myanmar, is a country in Southeast Asia, which got independence from British Empire in 1948.
- Myanmar has an area of 676,578 km<sup>2</sup> with total population of 55 million approximately. No official census has been held since 1983.
- According to 2011 CIA World factbook, there are 89% Buddhist, 4% Muslim, 4% Christian, 1% Animist and 2% other.
- Most of the period, the country has been ruled by military.

- Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won the elections in 1990 but military junta refused to hand over the power.
- Nobel Peace Prize recipient (1991) Aung San Suu Kyi, has been put under house arrest from 1989 to 1995, and was again placed under house detention in September 2000.
- In 2011 the military junta was dissolved following a general election in 2010 and a civilian government in coalition with military has been installed.
- Myanmar is rich in natural resources like petroleum, timber, natural gas etc.

# Muslims in Myanmar

- Arab Muslim traders and navigators were early settlers from the 8th century onward in coastal regions of Burma especially in Arakan (Rakhine) which is separated from Buddhist Burma by a range of mountains called the Arakan Mountains, and the province is about 20,000 square miles in area, with Akyab (Sittwe) as its provincial capital.
- With the passage of time, the number of Muslims in Arakan began to increase. Muslim saints along with traders played an important role in preaching Islam.

- In 1420 AD, the first Islamic state was declared in Arakan under the leadership of Suleiman Shah and for the next 350 years country was ruled by Muslim rulers. In 1784 the country was once again attacked and occupied by Buddhist Burma, and by the British since 1824 till its independence in 1948.
- Thus Muslims in Arakan have more than 1200 years old history, tradition, culture and civilization found scattered even today in every nook and corner of the land.

- Other Muslims who came to the area in later centuries after Arab traders include Persians, Moguls, Turks, Pathans and Bengalis.
- Rohingyas developed from different stocks of people who concentrated in a common geographical location. The largest, also the poorest, Muslim ethnic group in Myanmar today is that of the Rohingyas. This struggling community lives primarily in Myanmar's northwestern Rakhine state.

- There are approximately 750,000 **stateless** Rohingya Muslims in Northern Rakhine State. Elsewhere, there are roughly 150,000 Rohingyas living in nine refugee camps in Thailand. Approximately 28,000 Rohingyas are registered as living in two official refugee camps in Bangladesh, and more than 200,000 unregistered Rohingyas live in surrounding towns and villages outside the two camps.
- According to the UN, they are one of the most persecuted minorities in the world.

# Muslims' Persecution

- 1942 WW II: Settling of Buddhists in north of Arakan, conflict ensued.
- 1948 Independence: 13000 refugees still in East Pakistan, not allowed to return.
- Democratic decade: 1950-62 U Nu & U Ba Swe PMs, signs of change & recognition.
- Gen Aung San drafted constitution and Panlong Agreement was part of the draft constitution.
- 1962 coup by Gen Ne Win, 26 years rule, terrible period.

- 1974 Constitution, Arakan a state.
- 1977 Nagamin Operation (King of Dragons) suppression / violence / killing.
- 1978 Mass exodus 0.2 million migrated to Bangladesh, UN to intervene under pressure from Muslim states.
- 1979 Shwe Hinthia Operation (Golden Bird) repatriation.
- 1982 Citizenship Law, three categories: citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens, Muslims lost all rights including of association, freedom of movement etc.
- 1988 Junta take over with no change in treatment of Muslims.

- 1990 elections, right to vote and being represented, two groups National Democratic Party for Human Rights & Mayu Party, polled 80% votes in Northern Arakan, Junta refused to accept all results, military deployments reinforced.
- 1991-92 another mass exodus, 0.26 million left for Bangladesh, first solidarity then resistance, forced repatriation, protests / violence, UN engaged, negotiations continued with Bangladesh/Myanmar for repatriation of willing refugees.
- Those who returned have miserable times, houses demolished / properties confiscated / forced labour.
- 1996 Repatriation / exodus again.

# Current Conflict

- On June 4, 2012, Rakhine Buddhists attacked a bus of Muslims in Rakhine state, blaming them for the rape and murder of a woman.
- On June 10, state of emergency was declared in Rakhine by govt. of Myanmar, allowing military to participate in administration of the region.
- Military backed violence against Muslims thus turned horrible.
- Due to lack of access of independent sources, accurate figures of losses due to violence are unavailable.

- Mohemed Nour Rohingya, Political Activist in Jeddah, told on Aljazeera that about 30,000-40,000 people are dead. Many other sources also claim that the figure is about 30 thousand. Whereas many organizations including UN are quoting much smaller figure of hundred(s).
- According to UN, 80-90 thousand people have been displaced from their homes. Many people injured, many women raped and thousands of homes burnt. This indicates that **violence is not trivial or small scale.**

- Nearly democratic govt. of Myanmar as well as opposition leader and peace Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi not working seriously for Rakhine Muslims' rights or raising voice against their massacre.
- After more than 50 days of violence, international organizations just started discussion and still not working to investigate or stop the violence.
- Actually social media forced international community to consider the issue.
- OIC, UN, ASEAN and other organizations have not taken the issue seriously.
- Indonesian House Speaker Marzuki Alie said that UN must address “genocide” on killing of Rohingya Muslims. Few Muslim states have also condemned and raised voice over the issue.

# Conclusion

- Serious human crisis, not merely a minority or ethnic group issue.
- Human rights abuses condemnable worldwide regardless of ethnic, lingual or religious affiliation of the oppressed.
- Sporadic voices over the issue but united stance / forceful condemnation missing.
- World at large and Muslims in particular need to put pressure on the Myanmar's authorities to desist from persecution of Muslims.
- Uniformed and forceful stance would serve the purpose.
- Today's initiative of MUSLIM Institute is in the same regard.

# Thank You