

Problem of Rohingya Repatriation and Current Trends of Violence: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine in what manner violent and non-violent incidents of Rohingya are increasing in Bangladesh especially in the camps in Cox's Bazar since August 2017 due to the delay of sustainable repatriation. It also investigates how increasing violent incidents among the Rohingya make the threat for themselves as well as for the people of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. From the first influx of 1.3 million Rohingya, the camps are becoming a red zone of growing violent activities. Continuous delay of the repatriation process of those stateless people is creating possibilities for expanding criminal activities among them. To some extent, it is recorded, Rohingyas are involved in violent activities with the local people as well as the law enforcement agencies inside and outside the camps. Unexpectedly, there may have the same risk of violence in the relocated Rohingya refugees in the Bhasan Char (an Island in the Bay of Bengal). Against this backdrop, this is a mixed-method study where case studies and in-depth interviews are conducted as a qualitative method. Moreover, it analyzes the secondary numeric data from Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) database. Overall scenarios of violence from the Rohingyas inside and outside the camp areas are posing challenges for Bangladesh. Only sustainable repatriation can stop the turbulence among the Rohingya residing in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Rohingya, Repatriation, Violence, Bangladesh

Introduction

As I repeatedly said they (Rohingyas) are Myanmar nationals and hence, they must go back to their homeland, Myanmar, in safety and dignity.... I would like to emphasize that whatever we are doing in Bangladesh is purely on a temporary basis (Dhaka Tribune, 2021).

- Sheikh Hasina

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Bangladesh is facing the ‘fastest growing refugee crisis in the world’ (UNOCHA, 2022) and the country is the biggest recipient of refugees in the world. It is hosting about 1.3 million Rohingyas who live in cramped camps in Cox’s Bazar (Mercy Corps, 2019). Among these camps, Kutupalong is the biggest and most densely populated refugee settlement in the world. The Rohingya influx in Bangladesh started on 25th August in 2017. About hundred thousand of Rohingyas came to Bangladesh on that day to escape from a brutal persecution of Myanmar military. The Rohingya recognized that day as ‘Genocide Day’. The Rohingyas find themselves physically sheltered within the borders of a bordered land which does not belong to them. On the contrary, the land they claim to be their homeland is denied to them by the concerned state authorities under the rubric of ‘nationalism’ and ‘state security’ (Mohsin, 2019). Bangladesh’s government welcomed these stateless Rohingyas with humanitarian dignity. Bangladesh has made temporary camps for their sufficient accommodations in Ukhiya, Teknaf and Kutupalong in Cox’s Bazar. Recently, the Bangladesh government has also transferred a large number of the Rohingya to Bhasan Char (an island adjacent to the Bay of Bengal) in the Noakhali district with plenty of human facilities. Though not being party of the persecution, Bangladesh is also trying to create an identity of these displaced Rohingyas with dignity by attracting the attention of the international human rights activists including the United Nations (UN), while Myanmar denied their citizenship rights.

As Rohingyas are displaced after being tortured, burnt, exploited, raped, and denied their human rights, they are in a destitute situation. In the Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar, there are incalculable young men and women who are totally jobless and hopeless about their uncertain future. Recently, they are getting involved in several criminal activities like drug peddling, human trafficking, abducting, gang robbery, rape, murder and so on. Rohingya people, after the entire exploitation they have experienced in their home country, are now associating with violent activities in the only place they were sheltered, the refugee camps in Bangladesh (Rahman & Kabir, 2021). Most of the perpetrators are the Rohingya people themselves who are involved in numerous violent activities. Women and girls are extremely vulnerable in the camps; many of them are victims of sexual violence, harassment and human trafficking. According to Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO, 2022), total of 3326 Rohingya refugees are detained due to drug peddling, trespassing, arms possessions, human trafficking and other violent activities. The violent incidents are increasing according to the data. The Government of Bangladesh has transferred near one lakh Rohingya (*Dhaka Tribune*, 2021; *Reuters*, 2018) to the Bhasan Char (an island of the Bay of Bengal) in Noakhali. Though it is a safer place for Rohingyas, but there might be the same risks (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The condition of the Rohingya camps is still under threat. Since 2017, more than two thousand (2348) of Rohingya people are accused by Bangladesh Police or other joint forces in 1301 cases in Cox’s Bazar (Cox’s Bazar District Police, 2021). With reference to Bangladesh Police, 234 have been murdered and 360 are injured in different clashes (the total number of deaths is 228 according to Bangladesh Peace

Observatory) by different extremist groups since 2017. This number is increasing gradually in different places of Bangladesh, especially in the camps of Cox's Bazar district. After shifting the Rohingya people in relocated Bhasan Char in Noakhali, still there may be the same risk within their community. Against this backdrop, this study is significant to know about the alarming violent incidences. This study also can help the national and international human rights activists over the repatriation of the Rohingyas.

This article is divided into eight sections, including introduction and conclusion. The second section focuses on the recent progress of repatriation of Rohingya refugees while the third section discusses literature review. In the fourth section, the authors explain the theoretical framework while methodology of the study has been discussed in the following section. The sixth section discusses major findings of the study.

Recent progress of repatriation of Rohingya refugees

The Rohingya crisis is a humanitarian disaster that has swiftly grown with magnitude in recent years (from August 2017 to till now). Many Rohingyas do not want to go back to Myanmar until their citizenship rights and ethnic status are confirmed. The government of Myanmar has been buying time by dillydallying the repatriation. No one knows how long Rohingyas will have to stay in Bangladesh and under which conditions. Bangladesh will not force Rohingyas to return, still there are challenges to long-term living in the camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. Though Bangladesh is humane to the stateless Rohingyas but Bangladesh does not want them to settle or assimilate in her territory, but rather want them to be repatriated to Myanmar (UNHCR, 2011). Bangladesh is not in a position to integrate more than 1.3 million Rohingyas to her territory with its densely population as well as limited resource. Bangladesh also does not encourage the resettlement of Rohingyas in third countries because it may promote other Rohingyas in Myanmar to come to Bangladesh. But, a small-scale insignificant resettlement of Rohingyas was done to Canada, New Zealand and the UK in 2006 and onward (HR Year Book, 2008; Azad & Jasmin, 2013). Canada was the first country to resettle Rohingya from refugee camps in Bangladesh between 2006 to 2010 only some 300 arrived in Canada (Open Canada, 2023; Asia Pacific, 2023).

The first month of 2020 was a milestone for the Rohingya community as on this month, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) granted the provisional measures in order to preserve certain rights claimed by Gambia for the protection of the Rohingya in November 2019. Bangladesh also showed enthusiasm urging their support for the repatriation (*The Daily Star*, 2020; *BBC News*, 2020). However, the due repatriation process did not start as the Rohingya were unwilling to go back without some level of guarantee that they would not be persecuted again. Meanwhile, China reaffirmed its position in favor of the repatriation process. In November 2020, the new government was elected in Myanmar, calling it a landslide victory for the National Democratic Party (NLD) (*BBC News*, 2020). It made the international community and Bangladesh hopeful for easing the repatriation process. In a secretary-level meeting between Bangladesh and Myanmar in January 2021, it was decided that repatriation would start in June 2021 (*Voice of America*, 2021). In February 2021, the army staged a coup and

took control of the country, detaining the winning party's Head, Aung San Suu Kyi. Experts showed a mixed reaction about how this event might influence the repatriation process. Some fear it might worsen the situation, while others maintain that it won't change the scenario as the army was always playing the central role from backstage (*The Daily Star*, 2021).

Amid the situation, Bangladesh has planned to shift nearly one lakh of the Rohingya refugees to a new place in Bhasan Char. The Bangladesh Navy has prepared this site to relocate the refugees from Cox's Bazar to a much more organized and planned accommodation. Bangladesh's decision to move the refugees to a new place was not welcomed by the international community, though necessary conditions for living have been provided in the camps of Bhasan Char. International organizations expressed concerns about the location and other facilities at the new place (*DW*, 2020; *The Guardian*, 2020). The government of Bangladesh is determined that the Rohingya refugees will be temporary guests and has enacted policies to discourage local integration (Solomon, 2019). Notably, Rohingyas are not willing to permanently settled here, rather they want to go back to their homeland. According to Benedetta Berti, the issue of treating refugees as 'temporary guests' by Bangladesh is that it results in no long-term integration (Berti, 2015). Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated in Paris during the fourth edition of the Paris Peace Forum, 2021 as 'the world must act seriously to make sure that these people (Rohingya) can go back to Myanmar soon' (Kamruzzaman, 2021). Some international organizations have expressed three concerns over this relocation strategy: first, Rohingyas have been relocated to Bhasan Char forcibly, second, since Bhasan Char is a newly built island, there are potential environmental risks for the Rohingyas, and third, the relocation does not ensure that the Rohingyas' human rights will be respected on the island (Islam & Siddika, 2022). Amid these apprehensions, recently the government has placed two proposals seeking assistance from international community to relocate more Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from camps in Cox's Bazar (*The Daily Star*, 2023). The government of Bangladesh has also started shifting Rohingyas to the island, Bhasan Char. Moreover, the continuous visit and discussion between Bangladesh and Myanmar authority is noticeable regarding Rohingya repatriation (*The Business Standard*, 2023; Sakib, 2023).

Literature review

The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have remained stateless amid their refugeehood (Ahmed, 2010). Recently, a new Rohingya influx has brought new extremism-related challenges for the country. Earlier studies show that whenever Rohingya influx happened in Bangladesh, it created significant space for surfacing militant groups (Lintner, 1991; Ahmed, 2004). Violence among the Rohingya people is not new in Bangladesh but it increases dramatically in recent years. Rohingya people are sheltered in 34 camps and most of them are unemployed and hopeless though enough food and other services are provided to them. They are getting involved in several violent activities. National and international authorities are concern about the increasing criminal offenses among Rohingyas in Bangladesh. This study found the research gap between the previous studies and the current study. While there is no scarcity of studies on refugees, violent

activities of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have so far received very little attention in academia. There are limited studies which focused on the increasing criminal activities of Rohingyas which make security challenges for Bangladesh. This study is focused on addressing this research gap.

One of the most significant issues is the fact that these stateless people are being increasingly targeted by criminal gangs, and getting involved in several criminal activities. Thousands are at risk of human trafficking, while others are being recruited as drug mules to smuggle in ‘Yaba pills’ (brought in from Myanmar), which is causing serious drug surge in Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugees are observed as easy prey by drug dealers. And, as being victims of organized crimes, they often become subject to severe forms of violence too (*The Conversation*, 2019). At present, more than 15 Rohingya gangs, including the Munna group, Javed group, Anas group, Islam Mahmud group, Selim group, Putia group are active in the camps, engaging in several crimes including rape, kidnapping, extortion, trafficking, and even murder. As the number of firearms increases, gangs are becoming stronger. As gangs create parallel structures to dominate the camps, conflicts between rival gangs are broadening. Moreover, due to the influence of gang rivalry and illegal firearms, fights that break out over trifling matters sometimes lead to deaths. Recently, crimes committed by Rohingyas are creating perilous threats to Bangladesh (Rahman & Kabir, 2021).

On several occasions, Rohingya refugees were killed in police shootouts alongside Bangladeshis for their involvement in crimes and militancy (Uttom, 2020). Refugees are arrested for engaging in different criminal activities. The local villagers are subjected to unusually long sentences and denied due process protections. Moreover, violence and mistreatment of refugees in detention is widespread and jails are severely over-populated. In the Cox’s Bazaar jail, for example, which was inaugurated in 2001, currently there are about 4508 prisoners in the jail where the capacity is only 830. Which is 5 times higher than the capacity (*The Daily Star*, 2022).

Besides, Bangladesh bans mobile phone access in the Rohingya camps to eliminate the communications among the criminals. The communication blackout will also isolate Rohingya from their family living in Myanmar (*Al Jazeera*, 2019). But practically, Rohingya people have the access of mobile phone, SIM cards and even they have bKash account for transaction. They buy it illegally with the help of the local people by offering money. Different national and international newspapers reported that Rohingya refugees’ involvement in crimes has ignited fear among locals that violence might upsurge further if the Rohingyas cannot be repatriated immediately (*The Business Standard*, 2019). Some 2348 Rohingya men and women have been accused in more than 1301 criminal cases in the past four years. Total 3326 Rohingya refugees are arrested/detained by the police over more than 10 types of criminal offences (Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022). Incidents like attacks on locals outside the camps are also taking place. Jubo League (a political organization in Bangladesh) leader Omar Faruk was shot dead allegedly by a group of Rohingya miscreants in Teknaf Upazila in Cox’s Bazar in August 2019 (*The Daily Star*, 2019).

Moreover, Rohingya people are involved in drug peddling since last couple of years. The smugglers who have already come into Bangladesh, are now hiding in the Rohingya camps and committing criminal activities whenever possible. According to a report published by the Association for the Prevention of Drug Abuse (Manas), about 90% of Yaba tablets enter Bangladesh from Myanmar through the Naf River (Mahmud, 2017). Human trafficking is also an alarming issue as different cases are reported by the newspapers and the researchers (Palma, 2019). International Organization for Migration (IOM) illustrates that most of these people were trafficked to Chittagong or the nearby beach town of Cox's Bazar where men were made to work in factories, construction sites and the fishing industry while women were forced into domestic slavery (Karim, 2019). Intensity of the trafficking can be easily understood by the remark of IOM counter trafficking specialist:

Trafficking was already a problem in Cox's Bazar before the most recent influx of refugees from August 2017. With so many more people now at risk, it is vitally important to work together with the police and other and other authorities to prevent an increase in trafficking victims over the coming month (IOM, 2018).

Gender-based violence (GBV) among the Rohingyas in the camps is also a silent issue (Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014; Stoken, 2020). Every day girls and women are sexually abused by other Rohingya men in the camps. This is a normal issue for the Rohingya women and they are habituated to being abused. Even the local female NGO workers are also being abused silently in the camps. UNHCR representative reported that sexual and gender-based violence increased 1% to 7% in January, 2018 (Women Refugee Commission, 2018). A study conducted by International Rescue Committee in 19 camps across Cox's Bazaar revealed that 81 percent of GBV in the Rohingya camps are perpetrated by intimate partners, while 56 percent of incidents are of physical violence (Win, 2023). Nonetheless, as the repatriation of the Rohingya is getting delayed, the violence risk is raising gradually in the camps. As per as the criminal incidents recorded in Bangladesh, more incidents will be increased gradually to create a perilous future in Bangladesh. However, identifying the research gap, this study attempts to examine in what manner Rohingyas are creating challenges for Bangladesh.

Theoretical framework

This study is linked with a prominent sociological theory, the conflict theory. Conflict theorists suggest that crime in any society is caused by class conflict and that laws are created by those in power to protect their rights and interests (Siegel, 2000). All criminal acts have political undertones, and Quinney (1970) has called this concept as 'social reality of crime'. For example, Rohingyas are recognized as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) (Bangladesh Rohingya Response, 2023). They are deprived, displaced and denied from their human rights. They are now involved in the several criminal activities by being hopeless and homeless in cramped camps in Cox's Bazar. This is caused by the class conflict between the Rohingya and the authority of their homeland, Myanmar. In practice, Rohingya people has no sustainable future and this is a major factor of their involvement in crime. It is also reflected by

‘social reality of crime’ by Quinney (1970). The criminal behavior of the Rohingya is the anti-social behavior which results from class conflict and social and economic inequality (Morin, 2014). Dahrendorf (1959) also viewed society as being comprised of two classes. The first class consisted of those possessing power and authority and the second class consisted of those subjects to the exercise of power and authority. In this study, Myanmar authority has the power and authority, and Rohingya people are those who are subject to exercise that power and authority. However, conflict theory is linked with this study and the violence activities among the Rohingya are the result of that class conflict.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data and analyses. Different types of secondary data related to the violence of Rohingyas collected from Cox’s Bazar District Police as well as Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), which is a big data-based platform run by Centre for Alternatives (CA). This study collected quantitative data from August 2017 to August 2021 from the secondary sources to make strong evidence with regards to the Rohingya violence. These secondary data make this article more informative and representable to figure out the violent activities of Rohingyas in Bangladesh.

In addition, this study included a field visit to the Rohingya camps at Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh on January 08-11, 2019. Though it was challenging for authors (as the non-Rohingya) to get access to conduct interviews with the Rohingya people in the camps, the corresponding author visited the nearby camps with the help of two research assistants who are native in Cox’s Bazar district. Nonetheless, total seven case studies and twelve in-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted in Kutupalong and Ukhiya camps in Bangladesh. In this qualitative method, case studies are conducted with Rohingyas who arrived in Bangladesh from Myanmar in the recent influx which started on 25 August in 2017. Among total twelve IDIs, eight are also conducted with the local residents near these camps to understand the future of Bangladesh. Moreover, the author also interviewed two Rohingya refugees and 2 non-Rohingyas online in November, 2021 with regards to recent violent incidents held in the camps in Cox’s Bazar. During the entire data collection in the qualitative method, an open-ended checklist was used to collect data and the respondents were selected through snowball sampling.

Data analysis procedures

The secondary numeric data is analyzed by Microsoft excel using different tables and diagrams. The authors attempt to make the data representable and reliable to the readers. Additionally, the qualitative data is analyzed thematically and descriptively to make stronger with the evidence. The authors ensured all the ethical consideration during the data collection period and in the analysis sections. They maintained proper consent forms before starting the interviews and no identity of the respondents is disclosed (pseudo name is used where necessary) to ensure ‘no harm’ of the respondents during the interpretative analysis.

Major Findings

Trends of violence committed by Rohingyas in Bangladesh: Risks and lessons

Stateless Rohingyas are sheltered in Bangladesh since 2017 making the mind that this country is safe and secure to them. But now-a-days, the Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar are being forged to unsafe by Rohingyas who once came here for getting shelters. It is recorded that plenty of violent incidents in last five years have been committed by Rohingyas in Bangladesh. The scenario of the Rohingyas in camps is totally different from the outside of the camps. The Refugee camps have been unsafe and insecure due to the daily violent incidents by them. Rohingya refugee shared that:

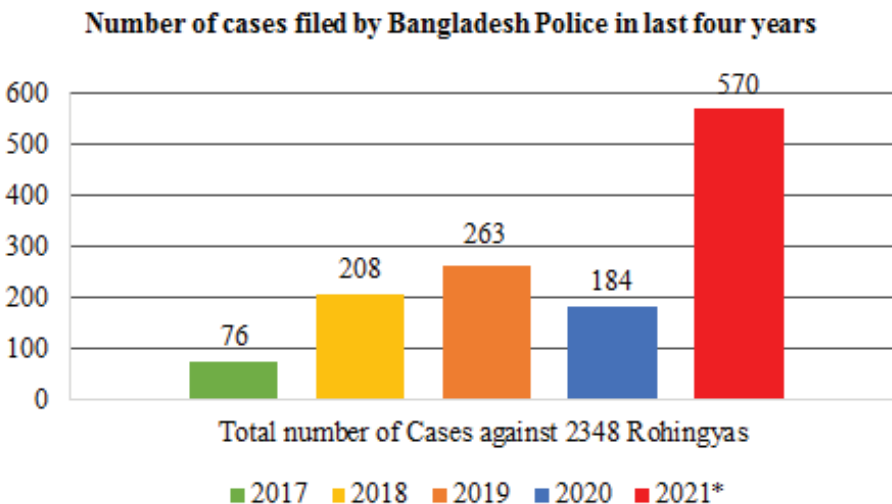
We are in the risk in our camps. The camps were safe and less crowded when we came here in 2017. But now 10 lakh Rohingya live here. We have only a small place to live here. We can see the violent activities in the camps, sometimes, arms groups’ involved in extortion and if someone refuse to provide them money, they abduct and torture them. That’s why we are anxious about future with family here in the camp. Who knows when arms groups abduct us?

In the last five years, the involvement of the Rohingyas in severe violence is getting high gradually. This is shocking to the authorities of Bangladesh and it is also risky and unsecured to the Rohingya people in the densely populated camps.

Number of cases filed against Rohingya refugees

The cramped camps of Cox’s Bazar are full of the stateless Rohingya people who are not willing to go back to their homeland until they are provided security and dignity there. Staying in the 34 camps in Cox’s Bazar, Rohingya people are getting organized to do numerous violent incidents. Different groups are also organized in these camps who have been involved in several criminal offenses in the last four years.

Figure-1: Increasing number of cases filed against Rohingya



Source: Cox’s Bazar District Police, 2021

In figure-1, it indicates the total number of cases filed by Bangladesh Police in Ukhiya and Teknaf police stations. As many as 23 Rohingya camps fall under the jurisdiction of Ukhiya police and 11 are under Teknaf police. According to the Cox's Bazar Police (2021), a total of 1301 cases are filed against 2348 Rohingyas in the camps of Cox's Bazar.

In 2017, a total of 76 cases were filed by Bangladesh Police against Rohingya people over involvement in violent activities in the camps in Cox's Bazar. The number is increasing day by day since the first influx in Bangladesh in 2017. The data displays that, the number of cases jumped from 208 in 2018 to 263 in 2019, to 184 in 2020, and to 570 as of August in 2021. As the rate of the cases filed against the Rohingya refugees are increasing, the involvement of the refugees in violent activities is also swelling. Among these 1301 cases, according to Cox's Bazar district police (2021), 762 cases are filed over drug trafficking including other cases like weapon (87 cases), murder (76 cases), rape (65 cases), human trafficking (28 cases), and other unknown types of cases (89).

Table-1: Arrest/detention of Rohingyas and motives of the incidents in Bangladesh

Sources	Number of arrest/detentions	Causes of arrest/detention
Data from Cox's Bazar District Police (August 2017-September 2021)	Total 1747 Rohingya refugees	Possession of arms and drugs, rape, murder, robbery, human trafficking, defying the Foreigners Act and attacking police.
Data from Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO, 2022) (August 2017 - August 2021)	Total 3326 Rohingya refugees	Drug peddling, Trespassing, Arms Possessions, Human Trafficking and Violent activities

Table-1 portrays the motives of detention/arrest of the Rohingya refugees from different places in Bangladesh especially in Cox's Bazar district. According to Bangladesh Police, total 1747 Rohingya people are detained/arrested over 12 types of motives like possession of arms and drugs, rape, murder, robbery, human trafficking, attacking police and other law enforcements and so on. Additionally, total 3326 Rohingya people are detained/arrested by police according to daily newspapers-based data platform and Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) over five types of motives like drug peddling, trespassing, arms possessions, human trafficking and violent activities. As the clashes and murders have also become common in the camps over the past four years, the number of total detentions is climbing up from 272 in 2017 to 341 in 2018, 1060 in 2019, 760 in 2020 and 893 up to August in 2021. These numbers are increasing gradually with delaying the repatriation of the stateless Rohingyas.

Violent and non-violent activities of Rohingyas

It has been four years of statelessness of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and there is little progress of repatriation to their homeland, Myanmar. Delaying this repatriation process is increasing violence incidents gradually since 2017. From their first influx in Bangladesh, daily newspapers have been recording plenty of violent and non-violent

incidents inside and outside of the camps. Bangladesh Peace Observatory, in the last four years (August 2017- August 2021), total 850 violent and non-violent incidents witnessed in Bangladesh where 228 deaths and 373 injuries are also recorded. The data is jumping year by year due to delayed repatriation. As the table-1 illustrates the Rohingya people are involved in several criminal activities in camps, it is severely unsafe and unsecured to them. During an interview, a Rohingya refugee pointed with fear in his eyes as saying:

I have come to Bangladesh with the hope of peace after being exploited in Myanmar, but living in the camp, I cannot see any hope in future. We are not safe here also. Several armed groups within our (Rohingya) community move here and there. Sometimes, we notice someone is tortured and murdered in the camp.

Recently, a number of violent incidents are recorded in the daily newspapers. The field visit in the camps and the secondary data proved the involvement of the Rohingya people in several violent and non-violent activities inside and outside the camps. Table-2 (BPO, 2022) displays the number of incidents, deaths and injuries recorded in the last four years between the actors and the target groups. Among the total violent incidents, most of the incidents have witnessed in several clashes/gunfights within Rohingya themselves (57), between miscreants and Rohingya (57), law enforcement agencies and Rohingya criminals (49), Border Guard Police and Rohingya (26) and sometimes Rohingya and local people (24). These incidents happen in an organized way by several armed groups among the Rohingyas.

Table-2: Actor and Target Group Segregation (August 2017- August 2021)

Doer/Actor	Target group	Incident	Death	Injury
Rohingya	Labour/ NGO worker / Police	10	1	43
Rohingya	Locals	24	5	59
Unknown / Miscreants	Rohingya	57	44	26
Rohingya	Rohingya	57	37	155
Border Guard Police	Rohingya	26	36	16
Locals	Rohingya	10	4	12
Rohingya	Suicide themselves	8	7	1
Law Enforcement Agency	Rohingya (criminals)	49	78	45
Unknown/ Unclear	Unknown/ Unclear	17	16	16
Total (violent incidents only)		258	228	373

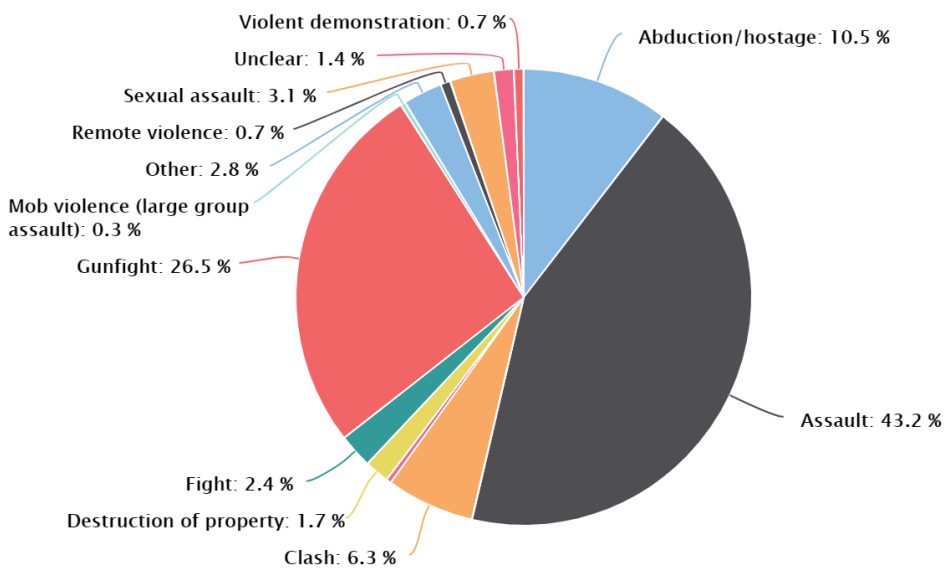
Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

Similarly, among total 228 death incidents, 78 murders are related to clashes/gunfights between law enforcement agencies and the Rohingya, 44 between unknown miscreants

and Rohingyas, 37 between Rohingyas themselves and 36 between Border guard police and Rohingyas. Besides, other murder incidents are also between different actors and target groups like unknown miscreants, Rohingya and local residents near the camps. Moreover, among 373 injuries, a large number of injuries are related to the clashes within the Rohingya people (155). This is a shocking and significant issue that need to pay attention. Rohingya people came to Bangladesh for a safe and secure life, but they are getting involved in violent incidents. They are not safe within their community in the camps though Bangladesh is trying her best to ensure their safety and security.

Likewise, 59 injuries were recorded between the clashes/gunfights between Rohingya and the local residents in Cox's Bazar. The data is also increasing gradually. An additional significant number of injuries are also recorded between Rohingya and law enforcement agencies (45 injuries), Rohingya and NGO/Labor/Police inside and outside the camps. Nonetheless, if the number remains high, the chaotic situation in Rohingya camps will also be increased. And this is risky for the Rohingya refugees as well as for Bangladesh.

Figure-2: Violent incidents related to Rohingya in Bangladesh (in percent)



Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

Figure-2 demonstrates several types of violent incidents related to Rohingya refugees witnessed in Cox's Bazar district. In the figure, nearly half of the violent incidents are assaults (43.2%) and a quarter of the incidents are gunfights (26.5%). In the cramped camps in Cox's Bazar, a number of the Rohingya people are involved in criminal offenses, assaults and gunfights is common in almost 34 camps in Bangladesh. Moreover, Rohingya refugees are also involved in abductions/hostages (10.5%), clashes (6.3%) and other types of violent incidents like sexual assaults, fights, remote

violence's, mob violence and so on. These violent incidents are increasing day by day with the passage of time. This is shocking to the Rohingya themselves and Bangladesh due to the threats to safety and security of the million stateless people.

Case- 1

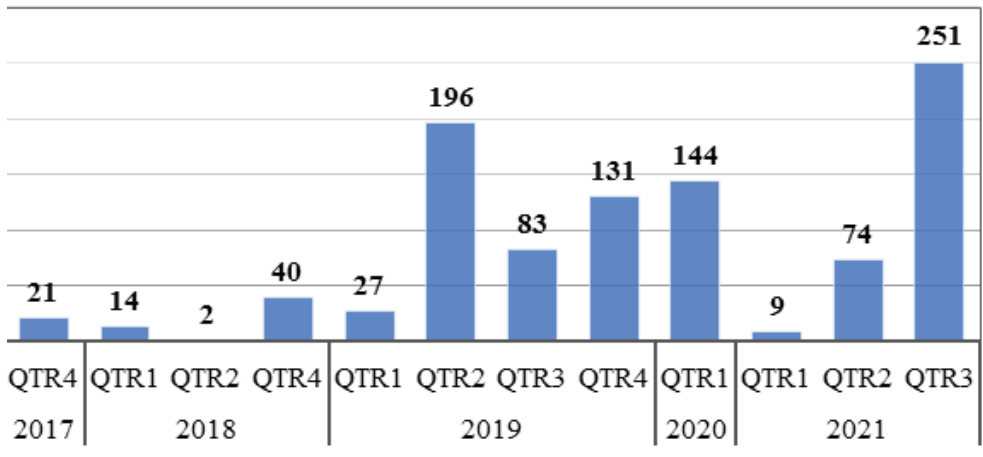
Mohib Ullah was a Rohingya leader who worked for the rights of Rohingya people. He was the Chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPH). He was also a school-teacher and a spokesman representing Rohingyas in international meetings. He used to move forward to resolve any problems faced by the Rohingyas. He worked for a long time to ensure their rights. In 2019, Mohibullah visited the United States White House for a meeting on religious freedom with the then President Donald Trump and spoke about the suffering and persecution faced by the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Also, in that year, he led a massive rally of around 2 lakh Rohingyas to mark the second anniversary of the crackdown by Myanmar military. He was shot dead point-blank at the Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar by unknown gunmen on 29 September 2021. Armed Arakan rebellious groups who are against Rohingya repatriation could have assassinated Mohibullah. The killing led to an accelerated tension at Rohingya camps in Ukhiya-Teknaf in Cox's Bazar (Human Rights Watch, 2021; *DW*, 2021)

Rohingya involvement in human trafficking

Rohingya people are hopeless and unemployed in the camps in Cox's Bazar. A large number of displaced Rohingyas are now either trying to go abroad illegally or spread to different parts of Bangladesh without seeing any hope for their sustainable repatriation to Myanmar. A local human trafficking group is targeting Rohingyas, mostly the women and the vulnerable refugees, to take the risk of fleeing to other countries by sea, or flee the camps in Cox's Bazar. They offer local Bangladeshi people to collect Bangladeshi passports with fake documents. Some local human trafficking groups also offer Rohingyas with a considerable amount of money to flee to Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries for better future than Bangladesh. Rohingyas who think they would be safer fleeing to other countries, accept the offer. A Rohingya refugee opined that:

Rohingya people in the camps are illiterate and mostly vulnerable. There is the human trafficking syndicate in the camps. Some traffickers are also from Bangladeshi people. They try to offer the helpless Rohingyas to flee with them in other countries. But they cannot offer us who are aware of this trafficking.

Figure-3: Yearly segregation of Rohingya escape from the camps



Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

According to Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), total 318 Rohingya people were arrested/detained over human trafficking. Figure-3 demonstrates the total number of Rohingyas who have tried to escape from the camps to outside of the camps as well as other countries. In the last four years, total 992 Rohingyas are recovered from the human traffickers in different places in Cox's Bazar. In 2017 and 2018, the number of Rohingyas who have tried to flee from the camps were small (21 and 56), but in 2019, the number of attempts to flee has increased simultaneously (437). And after this drastic surge in number, law enforcements were active to control the Rohingyas in the camps. Afterward, in the year of 2020, the number was decreased (144) than the year of 2019. Subsequently, Rohingyas are still trying to escape from the camps. Till August 2021, a total 333 Rohingyas tried to escape from the camps and law enforcement recovered them from the human traffickers. Without seeing any hope and the delay of repatriation, Rohingyas attempt to flee from the camp to other countries for better livelihood.

Uprising incidents of Rohingya violence

As time flies, the possibilities of repatriation of the stateless Rohingyas delay. No national and international call is accepted yet to proper repatriation of the refugees. Delaying repatriation makes the chances of violence increased in the cramped camps in Cox's Bazar. In last four years, countless violent incidents are recorded in the daily newspapers. The involvement of Rohingya people in several criminal offences is rising gradually (2017-2021). Table-3 shows the yearly segregation of increasing rate of Rohingya criminalities. According to database, the total number of violent incidents is jumping from 55 in 2017 to 109 in 2018, 224 in 2019, 248 in 2020 and 214 up to August in 2021. Among these 850 violent incidents, a total 228 deaths are recorded which is also soaring gradually. With regards to injury, the number is uprising from 17 in 2017 to 84 in 2018, 82 in 2019, 125 in 2020, and 65 up to in August in 2021.

Table-3: Yearly segregation of uprising Rohingya violence

Year	Incident	Death	Injury	Abduction
2017	55	3	17	3
2018	109	21	84	16
2019	224	91	82	1
2020	248	77	125	13
2021 (till August)	214	36	65	19
Grand Total	850	228	373	52

Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

Rohingya people abduct their own community people in the camps if someone leaks any secret news of the arms groups/drug peddlers. This evidence is provided by a Rohingya youth in condition of not disclosing his name. According to data, total 52 abductions are recorded and in 2021 (till August), nearly half of the total abduction (19) is captured than the other years since 2017. Nonetheless, it is significant to mention that the highest number of incidents, deaths and injuries are recorded in the year of 2019 and 2020. And, this rising evidence is also reflected in the current year 2021.

Moreover, Rohingyas are involved in drugs/narcotics related crimes since 2017 in almost all the camps. A number of drugs related violent incidents are recorded in daily newspapers in Bangladesh. According to Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO, 2022), Bangladesh police arrested total 358 Rohingya refugees over drug peddling. Besides, it is recorded total 68 deaths and 75 injuries during the clash and gunfights in the camps. There are a number of factors found with regards to drug related violence in these cramped camps. A Rohingya refugee youth opined in this issue as:

The camps are also cramped and densely. A large number of the Rohingya people are youth in these camps who are totally unemployed and less educated. It is easy to polluted and use them in the bad works. The drug peddlers offer the youth to work with them. And there is the link of the Myanmar with the drug peddlers. And the drugs are supplied by the Myanmar to these camps.

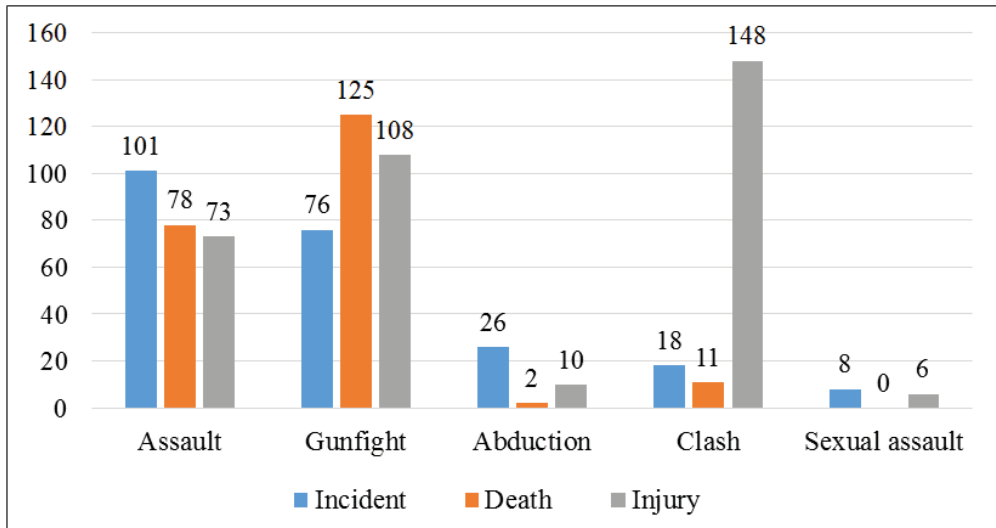
Case- 2

Abdullah (pseudonym), a Rohingya youth (32), lives in a camp with his wife and three children in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. He uses a mobile phone with Bangladeshi SIM which is bought from a local Bengali man by paying extra money. He is a conscious Rohingya citizen and aware of their repatriation. He is anxious about the future with his family. Sometimes, he experiences ferocious moments happen near his small house in the camp. He witnessed several clashes between two or more groups over drug related issues. Now, he is suspected as a source/messenger by a rival group. He does not go out of his house without any emergency because he suspects to be killed by that rival group.

Another Rohingya youth pointed his opinion as, in condition of not disclosing his identity:

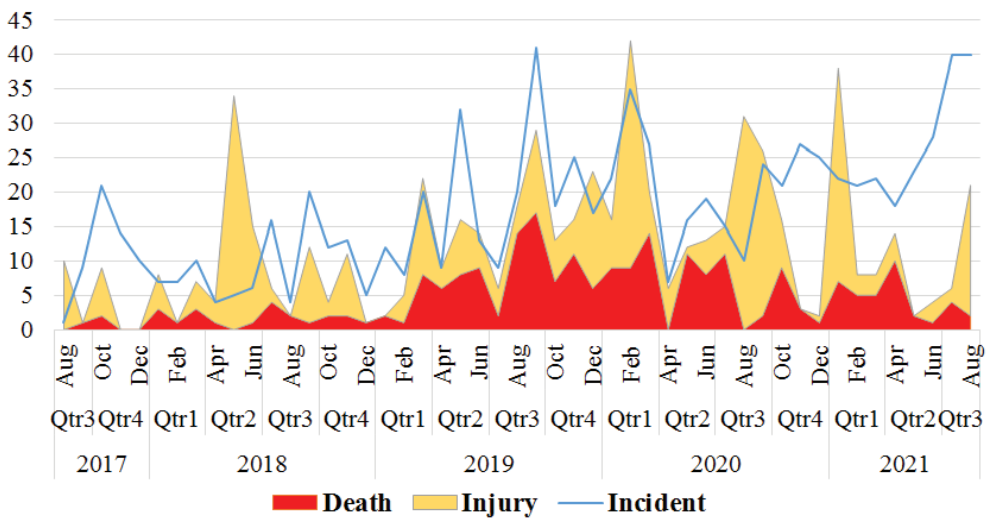
Drugs are imported from Myanmar and someone from Bangladesh import the drugs in the camps. The Myanmar authority want to increase drug peddling in Bangladesh to pollute its people. Besides, Myanmar can earn from Bangladesh by supplying the countless drugs to their own agents in the camps. Bangladesh should be strict in this regards.

Figure-4: Top 5 violent incidents related to Rohingya in Bangladesh



Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

In last four years, according to Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) database, assaults, gunfights, clashes and sexual assaults are recognized as the top five violent incidents committed by Rohingyas in Bangladesh. In figure-4, among total 850 violent incidents since August 2017, 101 incidents are related to assault, 76 incidents to gunfight, 26 incidents to abduction, 18 incidents to clash, and 8 incidents to sexual assault. Likewise, among total 228 deaths, 125 deaths are recorded over gunfight, 78 over assault, 11 over class and 2 over abduction. With regards to injury, (total 373 injuries are recorded), highest number of injuries is documented during classes between several actors and target groups (148). Moreover, 108 injuries are recorded from gunfight, 73 injuries from assault, 10 injuries from abduction and only 6 injuries from sexual assault.

Figure-5: Monthly trends of the Rohingya related incidents in the last four years

Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2022

Every day, various violent and non-violent incidents are occurring in the camps. The camps always remain chaotic as these are cramped and crowded. From August 2017 to August 2021, total violent incidents, deaths and injuries are fluctuated time to time. In figure-5, the data shows the monthly trends of violent incidents in Bangladesh. In 2017, the number of total incidents, deaths and injuries was in the initial stage. In 2018, the incidents and deaths were slightly increased but the number of injuries jumped up on April to June. After the end of 2018, the incidents started rising high with the number of death and total injury in the year of 2019 and 2020. These two years have the highest number of violent incidents. If the repatriation of these refugees will make more delay, the risks and the violent incidents will also be bigger frequently.

Discussions

Rohingyas, the most persecuted minority in the world, are still stateless in the camps of Cox's Bazar. It has been many years of these refugees waiting for a global decision about their repatriation in Myanmar. It has already been delayed. Without seeing any hope, in the meantime, Rohingya people are getting involved in several violent and non-violent crimes in almost all the camps in Cox's Bazar (Sakib, 2023; *The Time*, 2023). The study shows the rising ferocious criminal offences among the Rohingya refugees inside and outside the camps. Rohingyas are involved in more than 10 types of violence like assault, gunfight, clash, sexual assault, narcotics, human trafficking, abduction, and even murder. The violent incidents are jumping quickly from one year to another year (55 violent incidents in 2017, 109 in 2018, 224 in 2019, 248 in 2020, 214 till August 2021). The number of deaths, injuries and arrests is also increasing frequently. Some Rohingya people think that they are concerned about the rise of violent activities in the camps areas. This study also finds that the more delay in the repatriation occurs, the more possibility of increase of violence is feasible. The turbulent situation

in the camps makes the situation scared silently. The utmost number of violences, deaths, injuries in the camps since 2017 makes the camps unsafe and insecure. And, this situation is also significantly an issue of concern to Bangladesh. If it takes more time to their repatriation in Myanmar, Rohingya camps might be more unsafe as this study found the violence incidents are increasing. Recently, 20 Rohingya Muslims and Bangladesh government officials visited Myanmar's Rakhine State in an effort to urge their voluntary homecoming, which can be regarded as a major development in terms of the long-awaited Rohingya repatriation (*The Diplomat*, 2023). The overall progress can be summarized as security threats which might linger Rohingya repatriation (OXPOL, 2023). The steps taken by Bangladesh and other global community to ensure the rights of the stateless people need acceleration. Without proper repatriation of the marginalized people, the Rohingya community will be a curse for Bangladesh and the region.

Conclusion

In the contemporary epoch, Rohingya crisis is a global concern. Bangladesh welcomed the stateless Rohingyas with humanitarian perspective; but gradually the repatriation process is being delayed in recent years. Rohingyas are involved in several violent activities in the camps in Cox's Bazar and other places outside of the camps. They are getting involved in assault, abduction, murder, kidnapping, sexual harassment, drug peddling, human trafficking and so on. This study reveals the trends of these violent activities in Bangladesh in last four years. The primary and secondary data revealed emerging violence among Rohingyas in Bangladesh especially in Cox's Bazar district. There is the possibility of some risks in the camps and beyond. They are creating concerns for regional security in South Asia. If the repatriation gets further delayed, the Rohingya people would gradually become a huge burden for the society. Nevertheless, this study recommends further study on this area in large extent so that policymakers can realize how Rohingyas are involved in violent activities which is vicious for themselves as well as for Bangladesh. Besides, government and civil society should keep enhancing their proactive roles to draw global attention on the long-term solution to the protracted Rohingya crisis, stopping the crime and violence for making a peaceful situation in the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

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