

MYANMAR'S CONUNDRUM: ROHINGYA

Historical Process, Internal Dynamics and International Actors in Arakan



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Introduction

Although there has been a great deal of disagreement between different ethnic groups and government almost beginning from the days of independence, why are only the radical demands that extend to the expulsion of the Rohingyas from the country at stake? Why is the Rohingya problem presented as a war of religion although there are other ethnically diverse or Burmese Muslim communities in the country?

The answers to these questions reflect a historically, socially and politically multidimensional and problematic past. To call the recent military operations in the region which the Rohingyas live as “clearance” implies a process of ethnic cleansing which was fictionalized and put into effect to send the Rohingya population out of the country. The way the problem

has come up in recent years reflects an understanding that Myanmar has turned the problem into a war of religion and that assumes a central position to Budism which is the common characteristic of diverse ethnicities in the country in excluding the Rohingya Muslims. While realizing social breakup over the base through the efforts to create a common enemy via religion and to unite against it seems like the primary target, it is an obvious fact that the conflicts and disputes between other ethnic groups in the country and Myanmar state continue and substantially take up Myanmar’s time.

The latest operations in the regions where Rohingyas live infer that the ongoing process having started in 2012 is moving towards a non-

recoverable dark point. The exclusion that the Rohingyas as of this date evokes itself in a harsh and bloody way both politically and socially. While the developments especially before the 2015 elections which the current government took power and of today reveal a tragedy which the world cannot ignore, the people in Arakan continue to lose their lives, lands and futures.

With the purpose of knowing what's what in the region where there has been no progress regarding the solution to this humanitarian problem for years, this report summarizes the historical background of the process and examines the processes which drive Rohingyas to resist politically, Rohingyas' political resistance and armed movements, the recent events and recent developments regarding the humanitarian situation in the region. To better depict where the international community stands in the solution process regarding the humanitarian tragedy which Rohingyas go through, the domestic balances in Myanmar, the regional calibration and the international community's attitude are also included in this report.

1. The Historical Past of the Problem

Colonial Period

This period is of significance in terms of Myanmar's exclusion of the Rohingyas with the

claim that they were settled in the region during the colonial period. During the British colonial period, there was a significant proportion of labor migration from South Asia to today's Myanmar lands and this migration movement was organized by the colonial rule. Since the lands called Burma in that period was turned into a province of India under British rule, the migrations to the region were regarded as a domestic migration. However today, the Myanmar state considers the migrations in this period illegal and does not accept the citizenship of Rohingyas which are known to have settled in the region in the twelfth century and live especially on the border of Bangladesh claiming that they are a community coming into country with migration waves in the period of Britain.¹

Arakan² is a province in the West of Myanmar³ with coastline on Bay of Bengal. Sittwe, formerly Akyab is the capital city of this province.⁴

While Buddhist Magh of Arakan, known as Rakhine, constitutes the majority in the region, the largest group of other ethnic minorities belonging to Thervada Buddhism is the Mro and Awa Khami.⁵ Muslims living in the region are assessed in four categories:

- Rohingyas living in the regions of Maingdaw and Buthidaung bordering with Chittagong region of Bangladesh who are insistently called as "Belgali" by Myanmar state.

¹ Human Rights Watch. "II. Historical Background", <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm> (17 February 2017).

² The region which has been recently called as Rakhine, will be called as Arakan, the more popular name in Turkey.

³ In 1948, the country that proclaimed its independence from British colonialism received the name "Burma Union". Burma is a name for the "Bamar" race that makes up the majority of the country. This name was changed to "Republic of Myanmar Union" in 1989. Since the military government changed in 1989, the opposition of the military regime in the country has not used this name. Along with different interpretations of this change, it is also stated that this name has been changed as a reaction to the name of the British colonial period. However, the commission established in 1989 regarding the name decided that the name "Burma" excluded people from the Burma / Barma ethnic population, and that the use of "Myanmar" was more inclusive, and decided to change the use of spoken language to "Myanmar". While the use of Myanmar was adopted by countries such as the UN, France and Japan, the United States and Great Britain still use the name Burma / Burmese without accepting the name Myanmar. In this study, in parallel with the chronological process, the use of "Burma" was preferred in historical naming, agreement or pre-1989 nomenclature, and in the statements after 1989, the name of the country was mentioned as Myanmar.

⁴ Until the events that took place in Sittwe 2012, Rohingyalar was living in Aung Mingala area. Sittwe is also a center where the Buddhist priests are strong and active in the political arena. Sittawelidir, who was the first priest of Ottama who initiated the first attempt against British colonization in the region. There is also the All Burma Monks' Alliance, which is a significant contributor to the anti-army demonstrations, known as the Saffron Revolution in 2007, in this region. See for more information. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sittwe>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saffron_Revolution, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U_Ottama

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sittwe> (10 February 2017).

- The Muslim community that settled here during the reign of Mrauk-U (Mrohaung) between 1430-1784 and currently living in the Mrauk-U and Kya-uktaw regions.
- The descendants of Arab and Persian merchants who settled in Ramree Island, known as Kamein / Kaman.⁶
- Muslims who came to Sandoway region from Myedu due to the invasion of Arak by the Burma Kingdom in 1784.⁷

The total population of the province of Arakan which consists of five cities is 3.118.963.⁸ But in the country's latest census on 30 March 2014 financed by the United Nations (UN) Population Fund and international donors, the Rohingyas were not counted on the grounds that they were illegal Bengalis.⁹

The Rohingyas lived in the Kingdom of Mrauk-U between the years of 1429 and 1785 in the territory of present-day Chittagong state of Bangladesh. Mrauk-U, which was occupied Burma Kingdom in the 1400's, asked for help from Bengal, and repelled the invaders with the support of Muslims. Thus, the relations between the region and the Muslims in Bengal also began to develop. While Mrauk-U was ruled by Buddhist kings, Muslims were appointed to important positions especially in the courts. This was a prevalent practice in all kingdoms and governments throughout Southeast Asia at that time. Located in the north of Arakan, Mrauk U became the capital city by being included in the structure that was later named "Kingdom of Arakan". This kingdom exhibited a different type of structure than Irrawaddy Delta in southern

Arakan, Burmese kingdoms in Burmese capital, Bengalis, and Mughals in the west.

The arrival of Muslim merchants to the region dates to the 8th century. This city's development of becoming a trade center led the capital of the kingdom to slide towards Waithali and that played a role in the settlement of the Muslim merchants along the coastline. Towards 12th and 13th centuries, the number of Muslim merchants coming to Arakan rose and migration from the Islamized Bengal to this area also increased. From this point of view, Chittagong¹⁰, which is located inside the modern-day borders of Bangladesh, was a region where phases and interactions had been abundant before it was divided with modern national state borders as a geographical extension of Arakan which had been an independent kingdom until the Burmese siege that took place in 1784.

The Arakanese Kingdom was occupied by the Burmese Kingdom between 1784-1824 and a lot of massacres took place in that time. Having escaped from this oppression, the Muslim from the north took shelter in Cox's Bazar which is located in southern Chittagong. Rohingya Muslims in this region, which was under the control of the British, later raided the Burmese Kingdom. The Burmese Kingdom encountered the British in Chittagong to which they entered to seize the Rohingya. In 1811, the Rohingya occupied a large part of the northern Arakan by organizing militias. The Rohingya, who made progress, requested the assistance of the British against the Burmese; but their request was turned down. In the following process, the Burmese army repelled the Rohingya back to Bengal. At that time, a lot of Rohingya

⁶ This group, known as Kamein or Kaman, is an Indo-Aryan ethnic group and its majority population is Muslim. They are generally residing in Arakan. Kaman Persian is a wise word and comes to mean the arc. Kamanlar, an ethnic group recognized by the Burmese state, has ID cards showing Burma citizenship. They are becoming more and more affected because they are Muslims because of the anti-Rohingya raids in Arakan.

⁷ Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, Vol. 3, No. 2, Autumn 2005, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64388.pdf> (13 Mart 2017) p. 397.

⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sittwe> (10 February 2017).

⁹ Amine Tuna, 30 April 2014, http://insamer.com/tr/myanmar-nufus-sayimindarohingyalar-yok-sayildi_83.html (15 February 2017).

¹⁰ Mehmet Özey, "Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler", Araf'ta Bir Toplum, Arakan Sempozyumu, Istanbul, <http://istanbul.mazlumder.org/webimage/arafta-bir-toplum-arakan-kitabi.pdf> (13 Mart 2017), p. 69.

who took shelter in Bengal settled in Cox's Bazar, refusing to return to their homeland.¹¹

The British declared war on March 5, 1824, against the Burmese who were constantly raiding the British colony, Chittagong. This war passed into history as the first British-Burmese war. In that process, an alliance was formed between the Rohingya who wanted to protect their lands and the British. In consequence of the wars, The Burmese army was defeated by the British and forced to abandon the Arakan region to British Colonialism as a result of an agreement that had been reached.¹²

England colonized Burma with three raids since the beginning of 1824. In that process, Muslims from Chittagong were placed in towns along the borderline which were emptied during the Burmese administration in Arakan. The British gave these Muslim towns cultural and religious freedom and also a semi-autonomy in administration.¹³

World War II and Independence Process of Burma

The Burmese Kingdom, which was under the exploitation of The United Kingdom as a part of India until 1937, started to evolve into a semi-autonomous state within the same year. However, lots of ethnic groups that are different from each other are found in this kingdom. Each of these groups had been in pursuit of forming an alliance with external powers for their own independence. This situation became the main source of the division that has been going on until today and the armed struggles to which this division had led.¹⁴

Having had the support of the British in the colonial period; the Rohingya's another interaction with the British was formed in the period that was leading to World War II. The reason behind this was the promise of the British of giving full autonomy to the Rohingya on condition that they fought against the Burmese. However; instead of fulfilling this promise, the British gave the whole region to Burma.

Lots of people who belong to Bamar, which forms the majority of Myanmar or namely Burma's ethnic group, fought next to Japan to get rid of the British Colonialism in the period that was leading to World War II. However, other minorities supported the allied forces against the Bamar and the Japanese.¹⁵ Burma, which later formed an alliance with the British, gained its independence within the end of the war and all the other minority territories joined this new country's borders.¹⁶

While a federal structure was aimed; the Panglong Conference, which was about giving autonomy to different ethnic groups, was held during the independence process under the leadership of General Aung San. The articles about "Human rights, national and cultural rights, freedom of cultural autonomy, freedom of representation in the parliament", were in the constitution draft which was approved in this conference. However; after the assassination of Aung San along with his 6 friends from the cabinet on July 19, 1947, judgments of Panglong Conference couldn't be applied till today.

New Burmese constitution, which was prepared in 1948 after the declaration of independence, has always been a subject of confliction between the

¹¹ Cox's Bazar, whose previous name was Palongkee, was bought by Hiram Cox, a British officer in the name of the East India Company. Captain Cox was specifically commissioned to discuss a centuries-old conflict between Arakan refugees and the local Rakhines in Palongkee. After his death a memorial named Cox's Bazaar ("Cox's Market") was established and became the name of the settlement afterwards.

¹² Human Rights Watch. "II. Historical Background".

¹³ See. Özey, "Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler", pp. 69-71.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Myanmar (10 February 2017).

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Myanmar (10 February 2017).

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Myanmar (10 February 2017).

ethnic minorities in the country and the Burmese administration. In Burma, which has lots of different ethnic races, 135 ethnic groups were officially recognized and categorized into eight main groups. In the citizenship law, which was introduced in 1982, the Rohingya were not included in the list of recognized ethnic groups. The Rohingya became a community without a government with this law which was a turning point for Muslim people in the northern Arakan.¹⁷ In this period; many people, who were affected by the conflicts between the government forces and the local resistance groups in regions where different ethnic minorities resided, were displaced from where they lived.¹⁸

Usage of the Word “Rohingya” and Discussions About the Roots of the Rohingya

The Rohingya, who became the victim of a problem for which Myanmar and Bangladesh blame each other, are struggling for their lives in the middle of a dead-end which took many people’s lives. Remembering the independence years of Myanmar, which is 1947, and Bangladesh, which is 1971, the discussions about the homeland of the Rohingya, who were living here even before those two countries were founded, flared up. These discussions proceeded to the questions of whether the word “Rohingya” is appropriate to use and when it came into existence. Today, these discussions became an inextricable problem.

Ignoring the fact that a people has been living here for centuries; a community which consists of 3 million people who are living inside as well

as outside of the country, is neglected because of lack of proofs in the historical demonstration about the usage of the word “Rohingya”. This is a striking and bitter example of handicaps caused by the national state order and the age that we are living in.

While the researches about the usage of the word “Rohingya” continue; due to the fact that it was mentioned in the name of “Rohingya Jamiyyat al-Ulama” (Rohingya Scholars Association) which is thought to be the first political formation of the Rohingya that was founded in 1936,¹⁹ however, some sources base the origin of this word on 1936. In another source, it is mentioned that this word was used in Guardian Daily 20; in an article with the name of “The Sudeten Muslims”²⁰ that was written by Abdul Ghaffar who was a parliamentarian of Buthidaung in his time.²¹

As a result of modern historiography that takes written records as a reference, coming to the conclusion that such community doesn’t exist, just because there are no written records from earlier years, is a dead-end created by the modern era for benefit of some fractions. The discussions that are based upon notes of western voyagers and anthropologists about these people’s origin and the word “Rohingya” are manipulated by all parties. One of the general acceptances about the Rohingya is that they are a subsequent generation of Mughal, Afghan, Patahan, and Bengali immigrant soldiers as well as Arab and Persian merchants. Being accepted by Rohingya politic formations, this opinion can also be found in Muslim voyagers’ examinations and comments

¹⁷ Özay, “Myanmar’da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler”, p. 73-75.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, Ocak 2017, “Country Summary: Burma”, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/burma_1.pdf (12 February 2017).

¹⁹ Kristina Kironaska, Migration in East and Southeast Asia, The Rohingya Oxymoron: Stateless People Leaving Their Home Country, Ed. Samuel C Y.Ku. Kristina Kironaska, National Sun Yat-sen University Taiwan, World Scientific, 2017, p. 222.

²⁰ It is estimated that “Sudeten” is a reference to the state of Rohingians in the Sudeten region in the Czech state territory in 1938, or a reference to the Burma administration regarding what happened to the Czech state due to the problem of this region. The fact that the Czech state for the Sudeten region, which speaks German in the majority, did not fulfill a number of demands, resulted in the disintegration of the Czech state in 1938. Again, this argument supports the statements of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the disintegration process of India and Pakistan that “Sudeten Germans who do not give up their rights are not protected but Muslims will not give up their identity as they are oppressed”. These statements are in the book Road to Pakistan: The Life and Times of Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

²¹ Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)”, p. 403.

that they wrote in their notes about the region.²²

The presence of words, such as Roang, Rohang, and Roshang, in Malay narrations as well as works of Arab historians and the fact that the region was named Jazirat al-Rahma and Rahmi, are also mentioned.²³

Another opinion states that these people come from the same origin as Bangladeshis that live in Chittagong. This opinion is perseveringly supported by Myanmar as a part of its plan of removing the Rohingya from the country.²⁴ However, the communities that migrated from Bengal to here to supply the needed workforce in the period when Arakan region was a British colony, were later accepted as illegal immigrants by Myanmar after centuries.²⁵

Myanmar, with its citizenship law (that that was made in 1982), didn't confer citizenship to the Rohingya who live in the border region near to Bangladesh and who had settled in the area before 1824 when the first British-Burmese war took place. Since then, people who had settled here were presumed as illegal immigrants. According to the population census in 1983, Muslim percentage in Arakan state was 24.3% and they were named as Rohingya-Bengalis.²⁶

Apart from the other 135 recognized ethnic groups; the Rohingya were once again presumed, in the press release that was published in 21st February 1992 by Myanmar Administration, as illegal immigrants that settled in the region after migrating from Bangladesh since 1824.²⁷

Myanmar administration, which is still persistent on this statement, is trying to side with Rakhinesi who also live in Myanmar, to deport the Rohingya by drawing attention to the religion difference.

The Myanmar administration exposes both the Rohingya and the Rakhine to incidents with agonizing conclusions with this policy. It is also constantly reminding people the fear of Arakan State's division by keeping the traumas, which people went through in the past, alive in their memories. Whereas, this approach might turn into a quite dangerous situation for Myanmar's unison in the future.

Consequently, regarding the federal union that was formed in 1948, it is an unacceptable unlawfulness for Myanmar to identify these people as illegal immigrants, who settled in this region way before the foundation of the country. Lots of Chinese communities that were displaced from where they had lived to provide the needed workforce in the British colonies with similar enforcement and the ones that migrated with their own will are still living in notably Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and other countries; whereas many Malay and Indian communities live in South Africa as residual people. Taking the logic of the Myanmar administration into account, millions of people who had migrated or were forced to migrate in the British Colonialism era should be sent to their previous homelands. This situation, whose implementation is illogical and impossible, also applies to the Rohingya. However, the great dereliction of these people allows this state to which they are connected, to annihilate them.

Along with these, there are lots of examples concerning the fact that Myanmar is using the discourse, which refers to the Rohingya as illegal immigrants, for cyclical purposes. Two of the most suitable epitomes for this situation is the implementation of conferring the Rohingya their citizenship in 1978 and 1992 as a result of

²² İmtiaz Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", Araf'ta Bir Toplum, Arakan Sempozyumu, p. 17.

²³ Özey, "Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler", p. 69.

²⁴ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", pp. 17-18.

²⁵ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁶ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁷ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

UNHCR and International Community's pressure. Myanmar's politics which changes depending on situation, the inability to prevent this danger while Myanmar is dragging a large community into a catastrophe and the inability of solving this community's problem of illegitimacy are all results caused by the lack of grounds for legal actions that UNHCR, International Community and Rohingya foundations, which are located outside of the country, should have taken.²⁸

Being the first country that gets affected by every other incident that happens to the Rohingya, Bangladesh bans entries of the Rohingya from time to time. They state the Rohingya's ambiguousness of return to Myanmar, their probability of joining to armed forces, the concerns related to security, insufficiency, and indifference of the International Community and foundations about the return of the Rohingya to Myanmar as the main reasons for that ban. To be brief, these two countries' dysfunctional process and their dismissive attitude about the Rohingya's roots and where they belong affect the Rohingya highly.²⁹

Having started in the beginnings of 1980's and having been going on till today, the negotiations' last round took place between Myanmar and Bangladesh about the roots of the Rohingya and where they actually belong, in January 2017. Aung San Suu Kyi sent a committee to Dhaka in the first week of January to improve the relations, that had worsened, between two countries. Myanmar's General Director of Foreign Relations stated that the two countries should have started an identification and verification process, while President of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina called for Myanmar to retrieve Myanmar citizens who stay in Bangladesh. After carrying out evaluations

about the origins of the Rohingya, it was announced that they would be immediately sent back to Myanmar if they turned out to be Myanmar. However, Myanmar, which identifies these people as Bengalis, doesn't show a positive sign of accepting these people back to Myanmar.

Considering the problems that were caused by the process of taking Afghans back after they became the main target of terror attacks that increased in recent years in Pakistan, noticing the fact that people who reside in Bangladesh experience similar problems is not that hard. While returns are not even on the agenda of Myanmar, the country where violent acts that are related to ethnicity or religion occur frequently; lack of political assurance of the Rohingya, the problems that will probably emerge after the Rohingya is forced to return to Myanmar make us think about all negative outcomes of these situations. Because, the International Community, which does not move beyond bringing up the subject in meetings, doesn't have any serious attempt regarding the problem of this community who Bangladesh frequently brings up in meetings and sometimes forces them to return to Myanmar with its implementations.

2. The Rohingya Insurgency, Its Political Structure and Rebel Groups

Lack of a charismatic leader played a role in indifference and memory loss about the past as well as in the fact that Rohingya's resistance hasn't become as evident as the movements in Ache, Moro, Patani and other regions. The reason why Rohingya formations can't move collectively in the modern era and nowadays, why they lack a totalitarian structure that can help them express

²⁸ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁹ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 20.

²⁴ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", pp. 17-18.

²⁵ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁶ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁷ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

their problems in the international arena and the reason of conflicts and separations between groups are probably because of the fact that they lack such a leader. Keeping that in mind, the question of whether these separations originated from the difference in ideology or methodology is a subject that needs to be looked into. Fractures and gaps in this subject must be determined to understand the representation problem of the Rohingya and solve it prudentially.

Examining the information about the resistance process and the groups, it can be observed that they appeal to different methods depending on the attitude of the Myanmar administration. The struggle that continued occasionally under political formations and guerilla wars between 1947-1962, regressed in the process when the Myanmar army carried out severe operations and coups in 1954 and 1962. Besides, the lack of support from the people and the rejection of their request for annexation to Pakistan that they had been making since Myanmar's independence until Bangladesh Independence War, weakened the process.

About 2,000-2,700 Rohingya warrior participated in the active armed struggle in these years. The main goal in this struggle, whose effects continued till 1960, was to found a separate state for Muslims.

In the independence process of Myanmar that started between 1920's and 1930's, Muslim people in northern Arakan focused on All India Muslim League that embodied the idea of founding a Muslim state in India.³⁰ Riots against the British India that broke out in significant cities like

Rangoon hasn't spread to Arakan yet.³¹ Besides the interest of the Rohingya from northern Arakan in the development in India, Muslims who had Burmese origins like Rashid and U Razak played an active role in Burma's independence.³²

Simon Commission that was formed by the colonialist administration in 1931, was founded to receive opinions of the Burmese about constitutional reforms and separation from India. Stating the fact that Muslim representatives of Muslim League should be able to take office in administrative affairs and administration with a fair regulation, this commission emphasized the necessity of guaranteeing equal rights for Muslim, especially in Arakan state. However, because Muslim people, especially in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, didn't send their children to schools that had British system of education and because they only engaged in agriculture, the insufficiency of adults that can work in administration became a problem.³³

Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan became the first political structure which was founded under the leadership of Moulana Abdus Subhan Mazahari in 1932.³⁴ On the other hand, The Rohingya Jam'iyyaat al-Ulama that was founded in 1936, stands out as the first Muslim association with the word "Rohingya" in its name.³⁵ There hasn't been any clear information about the process of this party's foundation or its activities and whether it is the same organization which was called "Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan" that was founded within the same period.³⁶

²⁸ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 19.

²⁹ Ahmed, "Devletsiz Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 20.

³⁰ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 404.

³¹ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 404.

³² Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 404.

³³ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 404.

³⁴ Aman Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and its Activities", 15 September 2016, <http://www.rvisiontv.com/emergence-jamiatul-ulama-activities/> (14 March 2017).

³⁵ Kristina Kironka, "Migration in East and Southeast Asia, The Rohingya Oxymoron: Stateless People Leaving Their Home Country", p. 222.

³⁶ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and its Activities".

Jamiat-UI Kuddamul Islam, an organization that was founded in 1937, was active as a student organization of Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan.³⁷

After the withdrawal of the British colonialist administration from Arakan in 1942, the remaining memories of the problematic process, which was also going on during the occupation of Japan and was caused by the actions of the British colonialist administration against the Muslim people who live in the southern part of the region, started conflicts between the Rohingya and the Rakhine who live in the location.

Lots of Muslim people fled from the southern Arakan to the north in this period. It was stated that about 22,000 Rohingya had to migrate to Chittagong because of these events.³⁸ Many senior scholars, mentors, and staffs who work in the administration were killed. This led to a great gap in Rohingya's resistance due to a shortage of people.³⁹ The peace committees that was founded to resist violent raids of Burma, announced that the Islamic Republic of North Arakan had been founded on June 10th, 1942. The British declared the region between Naf River and Mayu River as a Muslim region on December 31st, 1945.⁴⁰

In 1946, Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan sent a committee to Karachi to negotiate the annexation of Buthidaung and Maungdaw in which the members of Muslim League and they live, to Bangladesh, which was called Eastern Pakistan at that time. However, the British colonialist administration that was still dominant in the region, declined this request.

Having received the news that Aung San and his friends were going to Delhi to meet Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1947, Six members of the asso-

ciation went to the region and met with Aung San and his friends. The committee handed in a file which contains subjects like enhancement of Muslim refugees' conditions who escaped from the conflict that took place during 1942 and took refuge in Rangpur and Dinajpur, guaranteeing freedom of religion in Burma, re-allowing the practice of Hajj that was stopped due to World War II, making no changes in the constitution of Burma without the consent of minorities, having Muslim representatives in the parliament and giving work permit to minorities for them to work in the administration.⁴¹

Rohingya representatives who were called "North Arakan Muslims" weren't invited to Panglong Conference which was organized on February 12th to form a federal formation with minor ethnicities in Myanmar. U Razak, who was the head of "Burma Muslim Congress", was considered as the representative of all Muslims. What the Rohingya object about this situation is that a Burmese Buddhist represents all citizens including the Muslims. Despite this, Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan sent two members to the congress but they couldn't arrive in time due to a misunderstanding or misinformation.⁴²

Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan negotiated with Ross William, who is a member of British Parliament, in the leadership of Lawyer Maulna Sana Ullah on March 7th, 1947 and they requested that the region between Kaladan and Naf river was left under the administration of Rohingya Muslims.⁴³

In this process; other movements that used guerilla war methods appeared. The guerrilla wars that they started to protect themselves in

³⁷ Özay, "Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler", p. 71.

³⁸ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

³⁹ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

⁴⁰ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

⁴¹ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

⁴² Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

⁴³ Ullah, "The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities".

November 1947, turned into a rebellion with the name “Mujahideen” led by Jafar Kawal in April 1948. Prior to that, Zaffar Kawal⁴⁴ founded “Muslim Liberation Organization/MLO” in May 1948.⁴⁵ The name of the structure was changed to “Mujahid Party” after the meeting that was held in a village of northern Maungdaw in May 1948. Zaffar Kawal was declared as the commander of this structure and Abdul Husein, who was a corporal at Sittwe Police Force, became the vice commander. It is stated that besides the protection motives of the Rohingya, independence process of Pakistan played a role in the formation of this movement⁴⁶ which was founded because of the mass migration after the incidents that took place in 1942.⁴⁷

The British didn't keep their promise of giving autonomy to the regions of North Arakan where Muslim people live in exchange for their alliance. The tension grew even bigger between the government and the Rohingya after Myanmar gained its independence in January 1948. Jamiyat al-Ulama and The Rohingya Youth and Student's Association, which rejected to be a part of Arakan State in the process of the Union of Burma and annexation of the states to the unity, requested autonomy for their own regions under the central government in Rangoon instead of being governed by Rakhine officers.⁴⁸

Mujahideen, or as in other sources “Mujahid Party”, sent an Urdu letter to the Union of Burma on June 9th, 1948 which contains a series of their demands. In brief, these demands were; giving

autonomy of the region between Kaladan and Naf river to the Muslim, giving citizenship to the Muslim who reside in Arakan, consideration of the party as a legal political party, liberation of the Muslim who were detained due to the state of emergency, return of the Muslim to Mrauk U with the help of the government (Kyauktaw and Myohaung) from where they were forced to migrate and general amnesty for Mujahid Party members. The fact that they called themselves “Arakan Muslims” and designated Urdu as their official language shows their tendency of intimacy to the Indian Muslims even before the division of Pakistan and India.⁴⁹ In consequence of the rejection of these demands, the party started an armed struggle.⁵⁰ Being also known as Mujahideen Fighters, this movement, which attempted at armed attacks in the beginning of 1950's, occupied a large part of the north. Besides that, Mujahideen gained a reputation after the Rohingya came into prominence and some youth movements and other formations were founded within the parliamentary process in 1950's.

All Arakan Muslim Conference was held in Alethangyaw village on June 16th, 1951. A report was published with the title “The Charter of the Constitutional Demands of the Arakani Muslims” after this meeting. In this report which states that the Arakanese Muslims and the Rakhine, also know as Maghs, should have equal rights, permission of having own police and armed forces, as well as a full autonomy for North Arakan, were demanded as they were granted to states like Kachin, Shan, and Karen.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Kironka, Migration in East and Southeast Asia, The Rohingya Oxymoron: Stateless People Leaving Their Home Country, p. 222.

⁴⁵ Özyay, “Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler”, p. 71-72.

⁴⁶ Özyay, “Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler”, p. 71-72.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, Country Summary, Burma.

⁴⁸ Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)” p. 411.

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, “Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State”, 15 Aralık 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/283-myanmar-new-muslim-insurgency-rakhine-state> (14 February 2017).

⁵⁰ Berdal Aral, “Self-Determinasyon Hakkı Ekseninde Burma'daki Rohingya Azınlığı”, Araf'ta Bir Toplum, Arakan Sempozyumu, November 2013, Istanbul, <http://istanbul.mazlumder.org/webimage/arafta-bir-toplum-arakan-kitabi.pdf> (13 March 2017), p. 31.

⁵¹ Ullah, “The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it's Activities”.

In 1954, Jamiatul Ulama of North Arakan and Jamiat-ul Khuddamul Islam took the name of “Rohingya Jamiat-UI Ulama” with a reform and reconstruction under the leadership of Moulana Abdul Quddus and after that, it got into the act with the name “United Rohingya Organization” by gathering other formations in 1956.⁵² They started a radio broadcast in Rohingya Language and the region was subjected to another administration apart from the Arakan State administration.⁵³ Four Muslim candidates were qualified to get into parliament in the free elections that were made in Buthidaung and Maungdaw. However, in this period resistance of Mujahideen continued; after Aung San was assassinated, U Nu took office and he promised Arakan and Mon statehood.⁵⁴ The president of Burma promised statehood to Arakan and the regions where other formations live, during the election campaign and this situation gave him a hard time. As a result, Muslim deputies objected to this judgment and they demanded foundation of Rohingya state.⁵⁵ In consequence of increasing objections, “Mayu Directorate of Borders” was founded in May 1961. Mayu in which the Rohingya are found in a great number is a region⁵⁶ which includes the west part of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung. With this directorate, connecting the regions in which Muslims live, directly to the Rangoon central administration was targeted by keeping them outside of Arakan state borders.⁵⁷ Formation of Mayu Directorate of Borders was actually the application of self-determination which was given

to the Rohingya in 1948.⁵⁸ However, this plan was abolished after the coup which took place in 1962. With the Increasing oppression of the military commission and the abolishment of Mayu Directorate of Borders in 1964, the region was annexed to Arakan State.⁵⁹

Pursuant to “Burmese Way to Socialism”, Ne Win’s first action who came to power after the 1962 coup, was nationalizing the free enterprises.⁶⁰ Even though the years 1950, 1951, 1956 and 1960 were milestones for the implementation of the parliamentary system, “Burmization” policy stirred different groups of the country again in this process. As a result of this situation, Tatmadaw (Army of Myanmar) which was the sole factor in protecting the integrity of the country, became prominent again in the country where the conflict was intense.⁶¹

In this process; Chinese, Indian and Pakistani investors left the country. According to the numbers, 100,000 Indian and 12,000 Pakistani left the country in these years. When it comes to North Arakan Muslims who had ID cars, they continued to reside in the region until the citizenship law that was made in 1982 and entered into force in 1987.⁶²

New resistance groups appeared in parallel with the coup in 1962 and the developments in 1964. The most important one of these groups was Rohingya Independent Force/RIF. RIF, which was founded by Jaffar Habib, also know as Muhammad Jaffar, united with Rohingya Independent Army/RIA in 1969 and its founder took on its leadership.⁶³

⁵² Ullah, “The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it’s Activities”.

⁵³ Ullah, “The Emergence of Jamiatul Ulama and it’s Activities”.

⁵⁴ Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)”, p. 413.

⁵⁵ Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)”, p. 413.

⁵⁶ The Voice of Rohingyas, <https://thevoiceofrohingyas.wordpress.com/2012/09/19/mayu-frontier-administration/> (17 February 2017).

⁵⁷ Aral, “Self-Determinasyon Hakkı Ekseninde Burma’daki Rohingya Azınlığı”.

⁵⁸ Aral, “Self-Determinasyon Hakkı Ekseninde Burma’daki Rohingya Azınlığı”.

⁵⁹ The Voice of Rohingyas.

⁶⁰ Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)”, p. 413.

⁶¹ Özay, “Myanmar’da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler”, p. 72.

⁶² Chan, “The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)”, p. 413.

⁶³ Jacques P. Leider, “The Muslims in Rakhine and the Political Project of the Rohingyas”, 18 October 2012, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/Jacques-P-Leider-2012-The_Muslims_in_Rakhine_and_the_political_project_of_the_Rohingyas-en.pdf

The party, which was called as Rohingya National Liberation/RNL in some sources and Rohingya Liberation Party/RLP in others, was founded by Zaffar Kawal on July 15th, 1972 and Muhammad Jafar Habib was assigned to the general secretary of this party.⁶⁴

In 1973, The Union Revolutionary Council/URC sought public opinion for a new constitution. The Muslim, who live in Mayu's border region, submitted their own proposal to the constitutional committee. The Muslim demanded a separate autonomous state or at least an administrative district again in this proposal. However, this demand was rejected again and the Muslim of Mayu region were precluded from the right of electing their own representatives for the congress in the elections that were made pursuant to the 1974 constitution.⁶⁵

Afterwards, the number of the members of RLP rose to 2,500 from 200 in 1974. Having deployed in Buthidaung forests, the members were forced to escape to Bangladesh due to the raids of the Myanmar army in 1974.⁶⁶

RIA, which was active in the leadership of Jaffar Habib in 1974, changed its name to "Rohingya Patriotic Front/RPF" in the leadership of the same person⁶⁷ and it was founded as a continuation of the previous resistance.⁶⁸ Jaffar Habib took on the leadership of RPF which had 70 warriors and Nurul Islam, who was a lawyer, was assigned to

vice presidency. Muhammad Yunus, who was a medical doctor, took office in this formation as a secretary general.⁶⁹ The Myanmar army initiated an extensive operation which they called Nagamine or King Dragon as in the international literature.⁷⁰ In consequence of Mass arrestments, tortures and similar applications that were made during the operations, between 200,000 and 250,000 people had to take shelter in Bangladesh.⁷¹

In parallel with the revitalization of Islamic resistance movements at a global level in 1970's, dynamism between the Rohingya increased. However, the resistance here wasn't as effective as the resistance in other minority regions because of the heavy response of the Myanmar army and the divisions between the Rohingya.

Pro-democracy riots that blazed out all across Myanmar in 1988, stirred the Rohingya too. The most important structure that became prominent in this period was Rohingya Solidarity Organization/RSO that was founded in 1982.⁷² RSO is the most important group that emerged after the divisions in RPF. After another division that arose in 1986 in RSO, Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front/ARIF was founded in 1987.⁷³ This group was founded by the warriors that were led by Nurul Islam vice chairman of RPF.⁷⁴ RSO carried out attacks on a small scale against security forces until the beginning of 2000's but after this date, it terminated its activities.⁷⁵

⁶⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_Liberation_Party

⁶⁵ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 413.

⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_Liberation_Party

⁶⁷ Leider, "The Muslims in Rakhine and the Political Project of the Rohingyas".

⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_Patriotic_Front (20 February 2017).

⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_insurgency_in_Western_Myanmar (10 February 2017).

⁷¹ https://history/?q=https%253A%252F%252Fen.wikipedia.org%252Fwiki%252FOperation_King_Dragon (10 February 2017).

⁷² Leider, "The Muslims in Rakhine and the Political Project of the Rohingyas".

⁷³ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arakan_Rohingya_Islamic_Front (20 February 2017).

⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

As for ARIF, it is a central structure that was formed by other groups including the ones that left RSO. In this process, armed struggle was on the agenda, but this dynamism couldn't initiate a military movement. ARIF attempted to prevent repatriation of the refugees who live in Bangladesh with the support of Jamaat-I Islami.⁷⁶

After military administration let political parties in the atmosphere where demands for democracy were peaking in 1988, the Rohingya demanded that their party be recognized, but this request was rejected. Thus, by changing their tactics, they found Democratic Party for Human Rights/NDPHR and joined the 1990 elections with this party. NDPHR received 4 seats in parliament while Arakan League for Democracy/ALD received 11. However, National League for Democracy, which received %80 of the votes in the 1990 elections, couldn't take office due to the intervention of the military junta. The tension, which was rising in this period, affected the political movements of the Arakan and the Rohingya who live in the region. The election committee canceled the delegacy of NDPHR and ALD.⁷⁷ Thereafter, these parties were shut down in 1991. Some members of the parties went underground and some were exiled.⁷⁸

In consequence of these events, some armed forces started to appear in 1990's within the border of Bangladesh-Myanmar but these movements didn't have a positive effect on the refugee crisis. These structures can be listed as; RSO, ARIF, RPF and Ittihad-ul Mujahideen of Arakan/IMA.⁷⁹

On 28th October 1988, a few members from ARIF and RSO founded London-based Arakan Rohingya National Organization/ARNO. The military wing of ARNO was active with the name "Rohingya National Army".⁸⁰ But this structure remained as a weak alliance.⁸¹ After political Muslim groups and armed foundations became targets at a global level since 11th September 2011, Rohingya struggle groups tried to express their thoughts through political discourses and stay away from other radical groups.⁸²

For instance, ARNO, one of the important structures, announced in a statement in October 2001 that defending oneself against the infringements on houses and chastity of people should be distinguished from terrorism and they also declared that they have no contact with any terrorist group.⁸³ These claims, that were made especially after 9/11 events, were counted as an assault to movements such as "Fight against terrorism" by Myanmar as well as all the other regions.⁸⁴

In 2008, ARNO was reconstructed by Nurul Islam. Currently, ARNO is working with The British ministry of foreign affairs, Burma Parliament Committee and European Union; and it also has mutual activities with Burma Campaign U.K. and other humanitarian foundations. Having common activities with also Burma Democracy Movement, ARNO is in contact with various ethnic forums.⁸⁵ It was stated that the Rohingya and the Rakhine are locals, therefore, they should be considered this way and they have been living here together for centuries; in the fourth congress that was or-

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

⁷⁷ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 414.

⁷⁸ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 414.

⁷⁹ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", p. 414.

⁸⁰ Leider, "The Muslims in Rakhine and the Politica Project of the Rohingyas".

⁸¹ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

⁸² Leider, "The Muslims in Rakhine and the Politica Project of the Rohingyas".

⁸³ Press Release: "Concerning implication Rohingya groups to have connection with terrorist organisation", 6 October 2006, <http://www.rohingya.org/portal/index.php/arno/arno-press-release/44-press-releaseconcerning-implicating-rohingya-groups-to-have-connection-with-terrorist-organisation.html>

⁸⁴ ibid.

⁸⁵ Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) Arakan Burma, <http://www.rohingya.org/~rohingya/portal/index.php/who-we-are.html> (8 March 2017).

ganized by the group in 2008. While condemning Burma's actions against the democratic movements, ARNO expresses that they stay loyal to their cause with their peaceful struggle, they are not in contact with any group outside of Burma and they devoted themselves to reconstructing the state as a community in Burma.⁸⁶

Nurul Islam, who worked as a chairman and as a vice chairman in these foundations, graduated from Yangon University/ Law department in 1973. Living in London, Nurul Islam currently continues working as the chairman of ARNO. He worked in collaboration with other political formations such as the Rakhine nationalist party of Arakan state "United Party of Arakan" in the period when he was in the region. After graduating from the Diplomacy Academy of New South Wales University, Nurul Islam did his master's degree on human rights in East London University.

Arakan Rohingya Union/ARU whose founding members include the members of ARNO is a structure which was founded with the initiative of OIC and Euro-Burma Office. Pursuant to the agreement which was made with the leadership of OIC in Saudi Arabia 30-31 May 2011, founding purpose of ARU was specified as finding political solutions for the problems that the Rohingya face. Impartibility of Arakan state which was agreed upon, living in peace, democracy, human rights and federalism principles were formulated with this agreement. It was decided to organize a congress which ARU would regulate with the participation of 25 foundations. This congress aimed at including all the Rohingya foundations in the process. Abul Faiz Jilani, Ko Ko Lin (Muhammad Kalim), Dr. Muhammad Younus from Bangladesh, Imum Ahmad and Salim Ullah from Saudi Arabia, Nurul Islam from the United Kingdom, Reza Uddin and secretary-general of the foundation Prof. Wakar Uddin from the United States, Sayed

Hussein from Norway, Zaw Min Htut from Japan and Muhammed Eyüp Han from Turkey are between the founding members of ARU.⁸⁷

Burmese Rohingya Association of North America/BRANA, 2010, is a structure which was founded in 2010 to form legislation and policies about the civil rights and develop facilitative methods for the legal and other types of processes of the Rohingya who reside in North America (Including Canada) and Myanmar, and the Rohingya refugees around the world with the help of United States Senate, United States House of Representatives and United States Department of State. Prof. Wakar Uddin who works as an academic at Pennsylvania University took on the chairmanship of this foundation.⁸⁸

Certain Rohingya Formations

- Arakan Institute for Peace and Development (AIPAD)
- Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
- Arakan Rohingya Refugee Committee, Malaysia
- Arakan Rohingya Union
- Arakan Rohingya Youth Association (ARYA)
- Bradford Rohingya Community in UK
- Burmese Rohingya Association of North America (BRANA)
- Burmese Rohingya Association in United Arab Emirates (BRA-UAE)
- Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia (BRCA)
- British Rohingya Community in UK
- Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRJA)

⁸⁶ ibid.

⁸⁷ Leider, "The Muslims in Rakhine and the Political Project of the Rohingyas".

⁸⁸ BRANA Press Release, file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/BRANA+Press+Release+1.pdf (8 March 2017).

- Burmese Rohingya Association in Queensland-Australia (BRAQA)
- Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand (BRAT)
- Burmese Rohingya Community Australia
- Burmese Rohingya Community in Denmark
- Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
- Canadian Burmese Rohingya Organisation
- Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organisation in Malaysia (MERHROM)
- Rohingya American Society
- Rohingya Arakanese Refugee Committee
- Rohingya Community in Finland
- Rohingya Community in Germany
- Rohingya Community in Italy
- Rohingya Community in Netherlands
- Rohingya Community in Sweden
- Rohingya Community in Switzerland
- Rohingya Human Rights Council, Norway
- Rohingya Muslims Solidarity Association-Turkey
- Rohingya Organisation Norway
- Rohingya Society Malaysia
- The European Rohingya Council (ERC)⁹⁰
- The United Rohingya National League (U.R.N.L), Myitkyina
- Union of Rohingya Communities in Europe, Denmark-Norway

3. October 2016 Attacks and Haraka Al-Yaqeen

Being stuck between Myanmar and Bangladesh, the stateless Rohingya whose lives are lost in the ocean, in the hands of human smugglers and organ traders; couldn't draw the attention of anyone to themselves until the possibility of them falling into the hands of the terrorist groups emerged.

There is some information which indicates that some Rohingya headed for Afghanistan and they joined Taliban because of all the oppression and injustice that they had gone through. This information is said to have emerged when the USA entered the region in 9/11. On the other hand, the fact that the Rohingya pulled ahead this long without an identity, makes people wonder about the countries on the route. It is still unknown how the Rohingya made this much progress and overcame the countries in between like India and Pakistan. Global smugglers who come to the region via the Middle East and the network that they have here are also subjects of wonder. As a result of this status of being "stateless", it is still a mystery how India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Gulf countries created the network that made it easy for the Rohingya, who are scattered in countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and the USA, to reach Taliban or other centers.

In the symposium which was organized by MAZLUMDER in 2012 with the name "Arakan; A Community in the Purgatory"; it was warned that these "stateless" Rohingya, who receive weapon from China, European countries, South Korea and other sources, could cause a chaos not only at a national level but also at a global level.⁹¹ Even though these signs were distinguished in advance and despite the warnings

⁸⁹ Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, <http://brouk.org.uk/?cat=5>

⁹⁰ There are branches of this organization which was established in Denmark and headed by Dr. Anita Schug and Dr. Hla Kyaw in Riyad and Chittagong.

⁹¹ Ahmed, "Vatansız Rohingyaların Vahim Durumu ve Ne Yapılmalı?", p. 17-18.

of the experts and the academicians, no significant progress was made on this subject; and the latest events outbroke in accordance with this foresight.⁹²

The attacks which were the reason behind the latest events, took place on October 9, 2016. According to allegations, several hundreds of the Rohingya organized an attack on three border police stations with knives, slings and approximately 30 rifles in their hands on October 9. Myanmar Administration didn't give any information about the identity of the attackers. The administration only announced that their number was 400. While 9 police officers were killed in the attack, 8 members of the group which was claimed to have organized the attack, were killed and 2 members were caught with ammunition on them.⁹³ The allegation that the attack was organized by the Rohingya, was consolidated after the release of videos in which a group of Rohingya people made a statement about the attack plan and their targets. In the videos, the Rohingya call all the Rohingya around the world to prepare for Jihad and to join them.⁹⁴ Hence, after a little while a group who call themselves el-Yaqeen Aq Mul Mujahedeen (Freedom of Faith Movement in English) claimed the responsibility for the attack.

According to the information given by other sources, the violent events in 2012 caused the foundation of Haraka Al-Yaqeen. While how these international formations reached this group and its members, remains as a separate question; in the interviews that these formations made with the members of the group, it is mentioned that the Rohingya who had resided in Pakistan and Afghanistan, started to give education to people in northern villages of Arakan after the violent events. Ataullah, who came to the forefront in the

videos, is a Rohingya who was born in Karachi and migrated to Saudi Arabia. It is claimed that after the violent events which outbroke in 2012, Ataullah vanished from Saudi Arabia where he used to reside. While there is no precise information about him, there are some predictions that Ataullah went to Pakistan and received an education there.⁹⁵

It is stated that Harak al-Yaqeen, whose headquarters is said to be in Mecca in the interviews, haven't attacked the civil Buddhists and its goal was to put an end to oppression that the Rohingya go through and provide the Rohingya their citizenship rights. According to the statement of the members in the interview, Haraka Al-Yaqeen doesn't have any contact with any global terrorist groups. However, experts say that in case of the continuation of the displacing, violence and torture against the innocent people; some of the Rohingya who hasn't radicalized till now, might join global terrorist groups or some groups may use this situation for their own benefits.⁹⁶

On October 17, 2016, the person with the name "Ataullah" expressed in his statement where he addressed to "Arakanese citizens, Myanmar citizens, and world citizens" that the Rohingya who are the most oppressed community in the whole world, experienced genocide and the world decided to ignore them and as the children of this region they would shape their own destiny. In this statement, Ataullah, who described themselves as an independent group apart from all the terrorist groups, indicated that they don't have any intentions other than giving legal rights and providing justice for the Rohingya, Arakan and all the innocent people who were the victims of military attacks. Later on, in his speech, he says "Our people decided to live freely instead of dy-

⁹² See Araf'ta Bir Toplum Arakan, p. 21.

⁹³ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

⁹⁴ See. H. Edrogan, YouTube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa8RdJv4gxc>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0mc-0jdMIg>

⁹⁵ P. Millar, "Sizing up the shadowy leader of the Rakhine State", <http://sea-globe.com>: <http://sea-globe.com/rakhine-state-insurgency-ata-ullah/> (14 February 2017).

⁹⁶ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State".

ing tragically in the hands of human smugglers in the Gulf of Bengal or in Thailand forests while escaping from the oppression of the tyrants. We swore to save our mothers, sisters, elderly people, children and ourselves from this oppression. Until our demands are met with the help of the modern world, we won't stop".⁹⁷

Being currently suspected by the people; this formation, which doesn't have contact with any Rohingya political formation or previous Rohingya resistance groups, made several points focal points for itself. While the organization announced that its aim is to stand up for the oppressed Rohingya people, the latest method that they used, caused displacement of 70,000 people, the death of 1,000 people (as much as it is confirmed) and lots of other agonies that cannot be put in words. Because, while it is absolutely known that the Myanmar army would respond heavily to this kind of action, the real aim of this group, which came out of nowhere suddenly, is still a mystery in people's minds.

Besides, the relation between Pakistan and the founding member of this organization has become a focal point and a target for notably India and other countries that have conflicts with Pakistan. While there is no concrete data about the principles, the sources that they get support from and the founding process of this organization, it is worth to keep in mind that they provide, to some groups, the practicability of killing more than one targets with one stone.

Simultaneously, in the period, when the events broke out; a new trend that states that there is an active Jihad in Turkey and "Rohingya brothers" should be supported, was started without letting people know the magnitude of the events. With this statement and the news which vanished in a little while, creating a public opinion was the aim;

however, this action which didn't last long, ended up causing death and displacement of thousands of people in Arakan.

4. Humanitarian Situation and A General Overview of Rohingya Refugees

It was stated 69,000 Rohingya took shelter in Bangladesh since the events that took place in October 2016. These attacks caused; the blockage of humanitarian aid from entering to the regions and the camps where the displaced Rohingya took shelter in, interruption of food aid to the mistreated Rohingya whose number reached 80,000 in these camps and losing the connection with the region completely.⁹⁸

It is estimated that at least 1,000 Rohingya died as a result of the operations which lasted 4 months. After the number of the refugees who escaped to Bangladesh reached 69,000 in a short period of time; Bangladesh had to designate different strategies and the dimension of the issue extended up to the plan of transferring the Rohingya refugees to Thengar Char where there are no settlements. This island is a place where monsoon rains are frequent and floods are seen in certain months of the year. The judgment of transferring the Rohingya to this island is suspended for now. As for the Myanmar army, it announced the termination of the "cleansing" operation that it had been carrying out since October 2016, on February 16, 2016. Besides this, the chief of defense staff of the Myanmar Army expressed that the Rohingya couldn't be citizens and they had already announced to the world that the Rohingya didn't belong to Myanmar. When it comes to the development that caused this statement, it is the decision that the UN Human Rights Council took on March 24th which involved sending a commission of experts to investigate the violations of the Myanmar army against the Rohingya.

⁹⁷ A. Times, 17 Ekim 2016, Faith Movement Arakan Press Statement, video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNrVIHPcEIk> (10 February 2017).

⁹⁸ *Al-Jazeera*, 19 October 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/food-aid-80000-rohingya-blocked-myanmar-161019135600701.html> (13 February 2017).

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch. "II. Historical Background".

Thousands of Rohingya, who have not been conferred citizenship because of the fact that they are a community which had migrated to the region in the British colonial period, were forced to live in Bangladesh by having been compelled to migrate to Bangladesh in four main processes beginning from the 18th century. The Rohingya, who experienced four major migrations under the rule of Burmese Administration, had to relocate in 1800's, 1940's, 1978, and between 1991-1992 because of chaos and oppression.⁹⁹

King Dragon operation, which is claimed to have started in 1977 to catch RPF members, is also claimed to have been started by the Burmese Immigration Authority and Military authorities to cleanse the foreign elements and edit the citizen records prior to population census. These claims are backed up by the fact that 200,000 - 250,000 Rohingya migrated from North Arakan to Bangladesh during the operation. Bangladesh asked for help from the International Community because of these migration raids. 13 camps were set along the border area but with the inveteracy of the situation, Myanmar had to let these people return thanks to the calls of the UN and Bangladesh. However, because of the severe traumas that were caused by the operation, few Rohingya returned to the country in the beginning. In response to this situation, Bangladesh limited the aids that were sent to the camps, to speed up the process and the number of people returning, in fact, increased.

On the other hand, prior to this process in 1970's, the Bangladeshi government was in search for reconciliation with the State Law and Order Restoration Council in Rangoon to send back the refugees rapidly that had crossed its borders till that day.¹⁰⁰

Once again, 250,000 Rohingya migrated to Bangladesh in 1991 and 1992 because of the operations and the oppression of the Myanmar

army. The Rohingya were placed in 19 camps in Bangladesh after these migrations. While the Rohingya were still migrating to the region, Bangladesh was persistent on returning these people to Myanmar. In 1992, Bangladeshi government tried to carry out its "Returning" process with the participation of international observers. However, the process reached a deadlock because of the reactions to the compulsions. Moreover, UNHCR announced that they resigned from the process because of these compulsions. UNCHR, which signed an official agreement with Bangladesh, started meetings regarding the question of whether they wanted to send the refugees back or not. While only %30 of the Rohingya stated that they want to go back, Bangladesh insisted on the return of all Rohingya by the end of 1994 and it decided to terminate the agreement, which was signed with UNCHR, in July 1994. The same year UNCHR received entrance permission from Myanmar to provide the security of people who were transferring to the return points in Buthidaung, Rathedaung, and Maungdaw. UNCHR gave up the individual meeting system with the recognition of the application regarding the weekly mass return of the Rohingya to Myanmar. Nevertheless, the permission of accompanying the refugees wasn't granted to the UNCHR members and the promise of giving the Rohingya their citizenship wasn't met. However, despite this situation, about 230,000 Rohingya returned to Arakan.¹⁰¹ Between 1991 and 1994, more than 2,000 Rohingya lost their lives in the camps due to poor health conditions and nutrition inadequacy.¹⁰²

After the news that a Rakhine woman was raped by three Rohingya men, emerged in 28 May 2012, the judicial event turned into a protest against the Rohingya. The Kameins who are a Muslim community apart from the Rohingya in Arakan were also affected by the attacks that took place during this process and as a consequence of these attacks,

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch. "II. Historical Background".

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch. "II. Historical Background". February 2017).

¹⁰² Aral, "Self-Determinasyon Hakkı Ekseninde Burma'daki Rohingya Azınlığı", p. 35.

140,000 people who consist of the Rohingya and the Buddhist Rakhines were displaced.

As of 2013, lots of extensive lobby applications targeting the Rohingya were arranged and as a result of these applications, a great number of negative applications against the Rohingya were put into effect.¹⁰³ The Rohingya, who are deprived of; the right of traveling between the villages or the districts, lack of access to governmental services, work under poor conditions, have limited work opportunities and who are restrained from marriage without the permission of local authorities; are struggling for their lives under these heavy and inhumane conditions. The Myanmar government banned the use of the word “Rohingya” one day before the census was taken on 30 March 2014 and defined the Rohingya in the census as Bengalis who are residing in the country illegally. Moreover, nationalist Buddhists also defined the Rohingya as Bengalis and manipulated the public opinion by stating that the Rohingya belonged to Bangladesh and not Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi defines the Rohingya as “a Muslim community in the Rakhine state” and the Myanmar government demanded from the European Union, the United Nations, and the USA to use the same expression.

Muslim people were banned from receiving ID cards, except for the Kameins, when the 2015 elections were near. Therefore, the hope of joining the political and social life of the Rohingya, whose rights were taken away, were faded. Whereas, the Rohingya voted in the previous elections even though they didn't have citizenship. On the other side; in a statement that was made by the International Crisis Group, it was warned that this course of events might lead to violence events after the prohibitions were put into effect.¹⁰⁴

Rohingya crisis came to the fore after Thai coast guards found Rohingya refugees stranded on the Andaman Sea offshore in May 2015. The situation of these Rohingya refugees who were left behind by the human smugglers in the middle of the sea, unfold the humanitarian aspect of the subject. However, this inhumane waiting in the middle of the sea went on for a long time, because the countries in the vicinity didn't accept them to their lands as refugees. On the other hand, after this event, which made the routes of the smugglers apparent, the smuggling routes were blocked, especially the ones that were leading to Malaysia. Therefore, especially young male Rohingya with the hope of a better future were prevented from escaping from Arakan before the monsoon rains.¹⁰⁵

In fact, this boat event in 2015 is not the first one; it is also known that there were some Rohingya who sailed to the ocean and took shelter in Indonesia/Aceh in January 2008, 2009, February 2012. However, the fact that they didn't draw as much attention as they did in the event in 2015, makes us question the claims which state that Rohingya subject is manipulated.¹⁰⁶

Even when the conditions in Bangladesh, where the Rohingya's number is the highest, are summed up; it can be clearly seen that these people's stories and aftermaths, who don't even have refugee records, are not exactly known by any group. Only 32,894 of the Rohingya refugees, whose numbers in Bangladesh are not exactly known, are registered. The living conditions in the UN camps like Nayapara, Jaliapara, Natingpara, Kutaplaong, Mitha Panir Chora are tremendously poor. Aids of civil society foundations are blocked from time to time; and the refugees, who stay close to the borders with the fear of losing their lives, are mercilessly sent back. Moreover, the fact that some

¹⁰³ “Burma'nın Bengaller Yoluyla İslamlaştırılması” is an example to these campaigns. http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/Khin-Maung-Saw-NM-2011-09-Islamanisation_of_Burma_through_Chittagonian_Bengalis-en.pdf

¹⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, “Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State”.

¹⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, “Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State”.

¹⁰⁶ Özay, “Myanmar'da Rohingya Konusu: Çözümler”, p. 76.

self-seeking groups are targeting these camps is a well-known yet an ignored reality.

Interior Dynamics and International Factors

Myanmar witnessed quite a few crises within 68 years when the minorities and also the Burmese had a hard time because of its political structure, inextricable balances, and hierarchy. The most important element which ruled the complex political structure is the Myanmar Army, "Tatmadaw". Apart from Tatmadaw which dominates the politics of the country, the parliament and the party which are in the administration separately from the parliament, are two other important elements.¹⁰⁷

In fact, besides the historical connection of the Rohingya with the region, who live within the borders of the country; the arbitrary violation of their legal rights, which they earned hence the independence of Myanmar, with discourses which states that such people don't exist, is under the shadow of many arguments and is not even counted as a discussion subject.

While the ostracism against the Rohingya remains as a tangible reality, one of the major errors that are made here is holding all Myanmar and its history responsible for this process. In the eyes of the people and the Myanmar administration, this situation resulted in the formation of a defense position as a reflex and the increase of hate against the Rohingya.

Regarding this region, there are some historical records indicating that the people were coexisting and were in a high level of interaction before it was under the rule of the Burmese Kingdom or the British Colonialism. In addition to the fact that Arakanese Buddhist kings were called with Muslim titles between 1430-1645 and Islamic

words were used on the money of the era; there is some other historical evidence which indicates that the kingdom was ruled by Muslim administrators in some periods. The facts that the British Colonialist Administration announced the region as a "national Muslim region" in 1942, Aung San agreed to give the Rohingya their rights and requested help from this region for Myanmar's independence in 1946, the Rohingya were accepted as citizens of the Myanmar Union pursuant to the Aung San- Attlee agreement in 1947 and the U Nu-Attlee agreement on October 17th, 1947 and these people were accepted as one of the local races of the region in the 1947 Constitution, section 11, 2nd and 3rd subject; are some historical realities that are ignored when the subject is brought up. Likewise, while the Myanmar Parliament in the leadership of U Nu in 1954 recognized the Rohingya as one of the ethnic elements, U Nu told "People who live in Maungdaw and Buthidaung are our national brothers, they are called as Rohingya. They also have national citizenship as much as Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Rakin, and Shan have. They are one of the ethnic races of Myanmar." in a governmental radio on September 25, 1954. One of the first presidents of Myanmar, Sao Shwe Thaik said "Arakanese Muslims are of course from locals. If they are not counted as a race, then we cannot be counted as a local race neither." The Rohingya had their right of voting in this process. In this context, beginning from 1946 till 2008 referendum, they voted for different levels of administrative units and in parliament elections until 2012.¹⁰⁸ It is necessary to thoroughly research the basis on which the arbitrary approaches in the historical process are based and how this kind of opposite applications took place together. Drawing attention to humanitarian crises which relapse from time to time or distracting people by using these serious crises, international foundations don't go beyond

¹⁰⁷ S. L. Clarke, "Working inside the triangles", <http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Myanmar-publication.pdf> (17 February 2017).

¹⁰⁸ Nurul Islam, "Rohingya Sorunu ve Çözümü", *Araf'ta Bir Toplum, Arakan Sempozyumu*, November 2013, Istanbul, <http://istanbul.mazlumder.org/webimage/araf-ta-bir-toplum-arakan-kitabi.pdf> (13 March 2017), p. 53-54.

warning Myanmar. Therefore, these warnings are perceived as an intervention means and it is conveyed to the public in this way.

As a result of approaching the problem in Myanmar by ignoring the historical background; a new chaos which was caused by the international groups in the area, campaigns, and the media discourses; appeared. The rapid transitions of alliances between the local and international actors of the problem cause new chronic problems. Subsequent to the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2012 after her political imprisonment and after she became an elected member of the parliament, the events that broke out in the northern Arakan drew attention to here. With the propagation of the violent events in the region to other parts of Myanmar, the problem led to the formation of an environment against the Muslim throughout Myanmar.

In this environment; the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi, as an owner of a Nobel Peace Prize, didn't make any comment about the applications which drew rebuffs of the world, with her position on human rights and democratic demands; caught attention. Her pragmatic behaviors on earning the support of the public and the army with the help of the opposition to the Rohingya in the period when her party was in charge, also stand out.

In recent years, when the fanatic nationalism and Islamophobia are on the rise, the fact that she uses similar phobic discourses in her speech, is regarded as a result of this conjuncture by some. Her discourses, in which she says that Myanmar is under the threat of "global Muslim force", are putting the Muslim, who are minorities in the country, and the Rohingya, whose existence is not even accepted, into danger. Aung San Suu Kyi's approach to this problem, for which even the in-

ternational community couldn't find a solution, caused a serious disappointment and she didn't even make any improvements in the areas where the Rohingya live or paid a visit to those regions. As for the groups, which are the most affected by her discourses and the manner that she is demonstrating, they are the remaining ethnic and religious groups who carry out hateful actions.¹⁰⁹

Despite all these negativities, there have been some advancements that can be considered positive. Recently, On March 10th, 2017, Wirathu who is notorious with his discourses and preaches against especially the Muslim, and the priests who follow him were banned from preaching anywhere throughout the country by Sangha Maha Nayaka Governmental Committee.¹¹⁰ It was stated that discourses and hate speeches of Wirathu and his follower Buddhist priests are damaging the order which is tried to be restored. This decision was made lest this situation should create a social chaos environment.¹¹¹ Ko Swe Win, one of the writers of the newspaper "Myanmar Now", called for a solution to stop the illegal actions, as soon as possible, that tarnish Buddhism's name. By sending petitions to Sangha Maha Nayaka Governmental Committee, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and Myanmar Religious Affairs Commission, he expressed that section 364 of the 2008 constitution which prevents religious as well as ethnic hatred actions, and similarly section 29 are violated.¹¹²

While the fact that the Rohingya are Muslim is an important factor in the violent attacks that happened in Arakan; it is also emphasized that violence against the Rohingya is not only an ethnic or religious racism in some evaluations. It is claimed that the most important factor here

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2013/10/joint-statement-on-aung-san-suu-kyis-outrageous-remarks-on-muslims/> (8 March 2017).

¹¹⁰ The Sangha Maha Nayaka State Committee is a high-ranking Buddhist monks committee, established in 1980 by the state, who oversees the Buddhist clergy "Sangha" in Myanmar.

¹¹¹ "Wirathu silenced by Myanmar's top Buddhist body", 12 Mart 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/wirathu-silenced-myanmar-top-buddhist-body-170311141258664.html>

¹¹² International Crisis Group, 22 Ekim 2014, "Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State", <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/myanmar-politics-rakhine-state> (17 February 2017).

is the fact that the Buddhist Rakhine, who are the majority ethnicity of Arakan, are exposed to discrimination by the Burmese, just like the minorities. The insecure environment, caused by the approach of the Burmese against the Rakhine, is also feeding the Rakhine-Rohingya violence.

Despite the image of the problem that is reflected from the opposition to religion, especially in Muslim countries; the Rakhine in Arakan are against the use of the word “Rohingya” instead of “Muslim” for fear of the possibility that it may lead to a possible autonomy in future.¹¹³ Lately, it was protested in Sittwe and Maungdaw that 53 Rohingya received official id cards in February.¹¹⁴

While this separation and the hostility between Myanmar, Rakhine, and Rohingya are feeding on discrimination between ethnic groups, the international public opinion and the way it is reflecting the events are heating up the problem in social media because of how people are taking these as a foreign threat.

The way that international groups and foundations are prioritizing the subjects that they give importance to, instead of focusing on Myanmar-wide problems, is bringing the situation to a dead-end. The events that started because of the polarization caused by this situation and after a Buddhist woman was raped and killed by a Rohingya, which is normally a judiciary case, went on the rampage in all Arakan. In 2013, violent attacks against the Muslim took place in some parts of Myanmar. A group of people, leading Buddhist priests from State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and 969 Movement¹¹⁵ participated in protests that were

heating up the events. Again, some politicians, who had their own interests in this state of instability, didn't refrain from escalating the tension in this period. Moreover, the state in this period, which was put forward and seemed to be a provocation of Buddhist monks, was manipulated by powerful political actors and their roles in the events were shadowed.¹¹⁶

The events that took place prior to 2015 elections and violence against the Muslim distracted the attention from the constitutional reform process which was vital for Myanmar. While preclusion of hate speeches in important subjects of this constitutional reform process with laws, protection of minority rights and revision subjects of citizenship rights could start a new period of time which could decrease the violence between communities; some authorities whose authorization and jurisdiction might have been weakened due to these reforms, supported the escalation of the tension and conflict.

Besides all these; after Buddhist priests promoted their speech which indicated that the Rohingya are connected to western countries and other Muslim communities and after politicians supported this speech, distrust of the Rohingya, which is regarded as a tool of outside forces, increased considerably. Moreover, this situation resulted in the application of tight security measures. For all these reasons, the ones, who intervened the problem in Myanmar to find a solution, should know that hostility against the Muslim and hostility against the Rohingya have different roots; because the solution of these two problems requires different strategies. Besides, the possibility of internal conflicts, which are being escalated with political

¹¹³ International Crisis Group, 22 October 2014, “Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State”, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/myanmar-politics-rakhine-state> (17 February 2017).

¹¹⁴ *Radio Free Asia*, “Myanmar’s Decision to Give Some Muslims Official IDs Stirs Protest” <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-decision-to-give-02272017143837.html?searchterm=utf8:ustring=rohingya> (27 February 2017).

¹¹⁵ The 969 movement describes itself as a movement established in Buddhist countries to protect these cultures and traditions. In addition to keep Buddha’s teachings alive and keeping, it describes its other important agendas as preventing the spread of foreign destructive elements that disturb the religious structure of Buddhist countries. For further information see. <http://969movement.org/what-is-969-movement/>. The actions of this movement, expressing itself with the figures that symbolize the virtues of the Buddha, are particularly embroidered in anti-Muslim demonstrations and leap to Buddhist majority countries outside of Burma like Sri Lanka. The 969 Movement, described by anti-Islamophobic and anti-Muslim actions and rhetoric, indicates that it operates to protect the Rakhines, which are “threatened” by the Bengali in Arakan.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Schatz, “In Myanmar, attacking the Rohingya is good politics”, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/5/29/in-myanmar-attacking-the-rohingya-is-good-politics.html> (8 March 2017).

calculations, growing into a size at which it cannot be gotten over, is unfortunately ignored. Certainly, reactions to these sad events that are happening in Myanmar, are not unfair at all; however, it is necessary to focus on the events that have been taking place in the Arakanese state in recent years and also the roots of the tension subjects which have a historical past and are holdovers of the colonialism era; for the solution of the problem. Because, Burmese kings, who tried to centralize the power to keep these wide and richly various regions under control, marginalized the minorities in the process of earning its independence from the British colonialism. Thereon, it made easier for the British to use the minorities for oppressing the central Burmese authority. The negative perspective of Myanmar on the minorities and the external actors resulted in granting a great importance and privileges to the army. The calls that were made to Myanmar without taking into consideration the process which justifies and feeds the military coups in the country, provoked the people against each other even more.

The change of the international power balances affects Myanmar, which had been closed up for a long period of time and partially opened itself up after 2012, and its internal balances. There are also some views that are interpreting the reason behind this opening, that is happening lately, as the activation of economic plans of outside powers aimed at the country. Besides the reflection of the competition especially between China and US, the other international actors in the region also have a great impact on politics and agenda of the country.

The ethnic groups near the Chinese border and their armed forces forced China and Myanmar to have a close relationship. This relationship grew even bigger with the increase of economic investments in recent years. There are some important plans of cooperation like hydroelectrical barrages, infrastructure projects, natural gas pipelines and operating mines between

China and Myanmar. Because the attacks alongside the border are affecting China, some projects came to a stopping point. However, despite all problems, Myanmar sees China as its strategic partner and it also leans on China at balancing the growing relationships with the USA. The fluctuating relationship of Myanmar with China provides a basis for a convergence between the USA and Myanmar.¹¹⁷

Local experts state that China is the only outside power that can use the internal conflicts of Myanmar with the carrots and sticks approach. It is also able to put the western peace activists out of action who are raiding the country since 2011.¹¹⁸ In this period of time when the latest peace process is on the agenda, China, once again, got involved in the process as a conciliator. The aim of this intervention is the desire of protecting the projects of trade and power structures in the region. Because one of the most significant routes of these projects is the Arakanese state. There are some projects about shipping oil to China via a way faster shortcut by constructing a deep sea harbor where oil tankers could berth.

The border that is shared with China which is one of the leading countries that have great impacts on the political history of Myanmar, the ethnic Chinese population within the borders of Myanmar, the civil and political conflicts in the country; form the basic agenda subjects in the dual relationship with China. Nevertheless, China's intervention to the country with the punishment and reward approach is depicted as "a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs" by some analysts.

As for the USA, the relations that grew within the frame of the axial shift from the Middle East and Europe to the South and East Asia in Obama's term was shaped mainly on balancing the economic growth of China. Right after Obama's election for the presidency for the second time in 2012, the first visits he made to Asian countries included Myanmar, too. After this visit, some processes like the assignment of a new ambassador, reconstruction of diplomatic

¹¹⁷ Clarke, "Working inside the triangles".

¹¹⁸ Clarke, "Working inside the triangles".

relations, enhancement of humanitarian aid to the region, and intervention of peace talks between the Myanmar government and the armed ethnic groups took place. While centers of power in Myanmar, which are over against the present increasing tension between China and the USA, are using this tension for their own benefit, the armed ethnic groups in the country also resort to the same strategy against the Myanmar government.¹¹⁹

When it comes to India, which is remembered with a similar politics like China's punishment and reward approach and where an extreme Hindu nationalism is on the rise; it is another significant actor in the region with regards to Myanmar. The rising discriminating speeches, especially against the Muslim, some worrisome Islamophobic developments, the tension which reached to a quite critical level in Kashmir; helped the Myanmar government with becoming bolder when it comes to the politics regarding the Rohingya. Besides, India, which formerly criticized Myanmar because of its military junta administration; became the leading country of all the countries which sell weapons to Myanmar by approaching to the subject with a pragmatic point of view. On one hand India is focusing its interests on Myanmar's oil and natural gas reserves; on the other hand, it is enhancing its economic existence in the country. Moreover, it doesn't react to the events that are happening in Myanmar for fear of China's growing population in the region. For now, India makes its moves by accepting the fact that these events are Myanmar's internal affairs. The main reason behind this attitude is that India doesn't want to open doors to interventions for its similar applications in Kashmir. It is criticized by some opponents in the country that India didn't respond to the fact that the Rohingya are discriminated as an Indian generation based on the memory that was handed down from the British colonial period. The fact that India, which

interferes with the problems of non-Muslim Indian minorities in Pakistan or Bangladesh, ignores these people because of the religion difference, who are discriminated and allegedly related to the Indians; makes us question the sincerity of its pluralist and democratic speeches.¹²⁰

While Pakistan takes part as an important actor in the historical process of this issue, in practice, it's one of the quietest countries at the political level when it comes to the Rohingya's situation. In the process that brought the Rohingya to this point, the bond that they established with Pakistan, which is the first authority to which they resorted to secure themselves, with the idea of gathering the Muslim of the Indian sub-continent; is forgotten by Pakistan. Unfortunately, the most crowded Muslim country of the Asian continent can't show the same interest as much as it shows to Kashmir; to the Rohingya issue. People of Chittagong, who supported Pakistan in the Bangladesh Liberation War, paid the penalty for their support that they gave to Pakistan by getting discriminated by Bangladesh. Since the opening of Myanmar, many of countries' existence here has increased via non-governmental organizations. While Australia, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the UK are focused on the peace process that Myanmar is maintaining with, especially, certain ethnic groups; Japan, Norway, Sweden and Australia from the aforementioned countries are substantially funding the process. With that, the donation flow to the process became the object of curiosity how these donations might be spent or where they might be transferred to. The pressure of the donator countries, which is about the reforms that have a wide range of application, prevents focusing on any specific subject.¹²¹

In Myanmar, where there can be more business opportunities with the arrival of middle eastern oil, the search for oil on the land and in the sea, is

¹¹⁹ Clarke, "Working inside the triangles".

¹²⁰ P. Gopal, "Regional actors should take a stand against Myanmar", <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/regional-actors-stand-myanmar-170213140632476.html> (15 February 2017).

¹²¹ Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma (Myanmar)", s. 403.

also on the agenda.¹²² In summary; a lot of foreign elements like USA, European countries and China are on a share hunt in the region for the search and operation of underground sources of Myanmar. Due to these reasons, it can be clearly seen that these events don't stem from a conflict between communities nor religions and in fact, as always, they are conflicts caused by interstate profits.

In this period when the Myanmar administration and the society see the foundations with western origins as a threat; not having a positive effect just yet, interference of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional organization, is an important step compared to former attempts. In ASEAN, whose latest leadership was taken on by Malaysia, the principle of "human-centered ASEAN" was adopted; however, despite this decision, ASEAN still hasn't developed a strategy for the refugee crises.¹²³ Most of the ASEAN countries are not among the signers of the UN Refugee Convention. But, after the crisis that took place in the open sea in 2015; although partial, there have been some mobilities in ASEAN countries, notably Malaysia and Indonesia, regarding the situation. In addition, the fact that the countries in the region are on the escape routes is the reason why these countries don't react effectively to the refugee crisis.¹²⁴

After the UN accused Myanmar of ethnic cleansing in November 2016, ASEAN ambassador of Indonesia stated that this accusation doesn't entirely reflect the truth, and the UN ignores the problems that Myanmar is facing.

Hereby, it was stated that Indonesia doesn't intend to call out ASEAN countries for a meeting to discuss the issue; moreover, Indonesian representative of

ASEAN Interstate Human Rights Commission told that the report of the UN should be questioned. In accordance with the principle of "not interfering countries' internal politics" in the context of human rights; while the violation of human rights doesn't receive enough attention, the comments of western rooted countries, notably UN's, was evaluated as Anglo-Saxon approaches because of the history of the region with colonialism.¹²⁵

After this process and the statements, the situation about the Rohingya reached a critical level; afterwards, ASEAN expressed its concern about the tragedy that the Rohingya are going through, by moving in a different direction for the first time in its history, in contrast to its principle of "not interfering countries' internal politics". Subsequently, with the invitation of Aung San Suu Kyi, ASEAN foreign affairs secretaries organized an unofficial meeting in Yangon regarding the issue and the decision of holding this meeting had been taken in another unofficial meeting in Bali to which ASEAN senior officials attended.¹²⁶ In the meeting, Myanmar government marked that it is going to inform ASEAN members about the humanitarian aid and assist the movements in this regard. Following the meeting in which attendees were informed about the situation in Arakan, foreign affairs minister of Thailand stated that all parties were content with the meetings. As for foreign affairs minister of Indonesia, he stated that Myanmar will inform ASEAN about the developments and Indonesia demanded means to transport humanitarian aid to the region. Foreign affairs minister of Myanmar, Suu Kyi also stated that the Myanmar government is persistent on finding a solution for this complex problem, but they need time for this issue.¹²⁷

¹²² J. Webb, "Solving the Rohingya Crisis", <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/solving-the-rohingya-crisis/> (17 February 2017).

¹²³ Mehmet Özay, "Güneydoğu Asya Çalışmaları (Southeast Asian Studies)", <http://guneydoguasyacalismalari.blogspot.com.tr/search/label/Arakanl%C4%B1%20M%C3%BCsl%C3%BCmanlar> (27 February 2017).

¹²⁴ Webb, "Solving the Rohingya Crisis".

¹²⁵ Evi Fitriani, a lecturer in the University of Indonesia in the department of International Relations, thinks that what makes the problem more chronic is the fact that not all states give the same reaction to this Anglo-Saxon attitude. He claims that ASEAN needs to do more. For more info. See. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/11/26/no-asean-meeting-to-discuss-rohingya.html>

¹²⁶ S. Yogendran, "Turning to ASEAN: Response to the Rakhine Crisis", <http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/turning-asean-response-rakhine-crisis> (21 February 2017).

¹²⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-asean-malaysia-idUSKBN1480E1> (17 February 2017).

At this point, it is another object of curiosity whether ASEAN ignored the principle of “not interfering with countries’ internal affairs” because of international reactions or another influence mechanism. Even though similar events took place in the past, the way ASEAN reacted to this extent for the first time makes people wonder. It was evaluated as an unexpected situation that the countries in the region reacted to this humanitarian problem and Myanmar’s internal affairs aside from the intervention of the western countries through minorities. However, it is also a mystery how much Myanmar will be concerned about this situation.

Undoubtedly, Bangladesh is the most affected country by the violent events in the region. After similar violent attacks that happened in 2014, Bangladesh, a non-ASEAN country, announced that it is going to form an official strategy plan regarding this subject. However, Bangladesh, a country which wasn’t one of the signers of “1951 Legal State of Refugees” or “1967 Protocol” and has the largest quantity of Rohingya refugees, announced that this problem isn’t its, yet Myanmar’s to solve in contrast to the decision in 2014 following the boat incident that took place in 2015. Bangladesh, which took the decision of sending 70.000 people, who had taken shelter in its lands, to a deserted island in the latest process; seems to have suspended the idea which involves an island where floods happen most of the time throughout the year and which is not suitable for the continuation of human life.

The ongoing attacks on the Muslim and the approaches to the subject, in Indonesia, pursuant to the oppression to which the Muslim are exposed; resulted in a critical reaction in public. This situation forced Indonesia to undertake a meeting with ASEAN regarding the issue. Following this undertaking of Indonesia, Aung San Suu Kyi’s visit, that was supposed to stay in Indonesia on 2nd and 3rd January, was canceled, showing the internal

problems in the country as a reason. Afterwards, foreign affairs minister of Indonesia visited the camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, on 6th January 2016 and then went to Myanmar as a guest of the foreign affairs minister of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi. Indonesia became the first country that visited Bangladesh concerning the problem and stated in these meetings that it is ready for the humanitarian aids to the Rohingya.¹²⁸

Following the latest events, Malaysia, in which 56.000 recorded Rohingya reside, exhibited a more positive behavior than it did back in 2015. Because, after the boat incident, Malaysia had announced that Rohingya were to be sent back to their country once they step into Malaysia. Malaysian officials stated that in case of a boat submersion, the refugees were going to be saved but also that they don’t want to accept the refugees to the country. In the same period, Indonesia, which endeavored to rescue the refugees till that day, reacted similarly.

However, following the latest event in Arakan, Malaysian parliament called for Malaysian government for a plan in the direction of taking all possible precautions regarding the process which reached an ethnic cleansing level. On 4th January 2016, widescale protests were organized in Kuala Lumpur. UMNO and the main opposition party took parts in these protests. President of Malaysia stated that these reactions shouldn’t be evaluated as an interference to the internal affairs of Myanmar and that the operations which are being carried out against the Rohingya in Myanmar are violating both the universal human rights and the human rights judgments in the ASEAN agreement. Also, one of the demands in the protests was the questioning of ASEAN membership of Myanmar in case it doesn’t put an end to this violence process.¹²⁹ Besides, during the visit of Malaysia’s army commander in Myanmar, he warned that the way the Rohingya are outcasted might grow

¹²⁸ Özay, “Güneydoğu Asya Çalışmaları”.

¹²⁹ Özay, “Güneydoğu Asya Çalışmaları”.

into a dangerous problem, which may threaten all countries in the region including Myanmar, by referring to the global terror organizations such as ISIS.¹³⁰

As for Organization of Islamic Cooperation/OIC, some of its members like Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Palestine, Iran and Maldives convened in Kuala Lumpur at a level of ministers on 19th February 2017. It was stressed in the final declaration of the meeting that the problem reached a point at which it cannot be solved with humanitarian aids and it affects/will affect all the countries in the region. Also, it was pointed out that in case of not granting a way out for these people who are constantly discriminated and oppressed, this situation might result in the formation of a source for the global terror organizations.¹³¹ However, after the meeting, OIC hasn't taken any initiative that is either notable or publicly known regarding the question whether it commenced effective movements or not.¹³²

While it is stated that the regional forces such as ASEAN, OIC, and India, international actors like the USA and foreign investor all have an effect on current politics of Myanmar, the differences between goals and priorities of all these elements divert the crises and disagreements to other points and create dangerous polarizations. While the violent attacks in the Arakanese state and the peace process in Myanmar are still ongoing, vital subjects such as the actors in the center of the events and the connection with these actors are ignored.¹³³

Arakanese Muslims or the Rohingya has been on the agenda for years in Turkey and people have

always been concerned about the problems of this distant geography. The sensibility of Turkey about this subject echoed in the global public opinion after the visit of Ahmet Davutoğlu and Emine Erdoğan following the events that took place in 2012. The sensibility of Turkey became a hope for all the Rohingya who live in diaspora.¹³⁴

During this visit, while he was discussing with Thein Sein, Myanmar's head of the state; Davutoğlu remarked that any kind of negative opinion about Myanmar, which OIC might have, can be prevented with the permission of transporting the humanitarian aid to the region; stressing that Myanmar's image shouldn't be shaken by the Arakanese problem. Having stated that Arakan is affected by this situation as a whole, Thein Sein demanded that the aids were also given to Buddhists as much as they were given to the Muslim. In the meeting, it was noted that the events weren't about races or religions, yet they triggered the hatred between groups in the region. Davutoğlu emphasized that discourses and propaganda that may cause interreligious confictions should be avoided, he also indicated that independent foundations ought to come to the region and make examinations in person; then invited Myanmar's head of the state to Turkey. Having conveyed his observations about the issue in the OIC meeting that was held in Saudi Arabia a week after his visit to Myanmar, Davutoğlu encouraged the organization to visit the region. After this visit, Turkey donated 50 million dollars to Myanmar.¹³⁵ Relief works of Turkish relief organizations are still ongoing in the region.

¹³⁰ Özay, "Güneydoğu Asya Çalışmaları".

¹³¹ Özay, "Güneydoğu Asya Çalışmaları".

¹³² A. A. Ahsan, "The Rohingya crisis and the role of the OIC", <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/rohingya-crisis-role-oic-170217102801957.html> (24 February 2017).

¹³³ Clarke, "Working inside the triangles".

¹³⁴ Clarke, "Working inside the triangles".

¹³⁵ S. Y. Naing, "Turkey Foreign Minister Tours Arakan State", 10 August 2012, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/turkey-foreign-minister-tours-arakan-state.html> (21 February 2017).

Conclusion

While communities in Myanmar are getting more and more hostile against each other, victims who lose their lives in this process are the innocent people. While the philosophy of our age which is based on “speed”, offers a kind of help, which is limited to save the day, to a lot of humanitarian crises pursuant to a mentality that made the idea of help a sector, it cannot find a long-term and constructive solution for the deep-rooted problem.

As of today, reports, observations, and examinations of the international foundations and evaluations of the founded research commissions didn't receive enough attention and unfortunately, there hasn't been any improvement on the solution of the problem. On the contrary, since 2012 till now, the process has been demonstrably dragging the Rohingya who are the subject of this report, to poor living conditions that one can't even imagine.

While being forced to remain as a “stateless” community, these people were warned many years ago that they might find the solution in a more unpleasant method. Now, these people, who are being destroyed on atrocious networks, may become the main target for human smugglers, organ mafias, and unstoppable terrorist groups.

Western countries or the countries in the region, which demand to get involved in the peace process that is going on between Myanmar and its minority groups, don't offer any solution in relation to the solution of the problems of the country which is rich in racial variety but is also just as problematic. On top of that, they, unfortunately, approach the problem in the direction of their own benefits and with an even more disruptive mentality.

Initially, besides from the ongoing ethnic and social studies, it is necessary to correctly understand the Rohingya crisis whose agenda involves the plan of sending tens of thousands of people

away. In order to achieve this, understanding Myanmar and studying the region as well as its problems in a realistic manner are essential. This subject is often mentioned by local and international activists who have a realistic approach to the region. In addition to the fact that the Islamic world doesn't go beyond taking these events emotionally, it is required to find new types of solutions to permanently resolve the problem in the country which is viewed through the comments of western relief or research organizations. This problem should be approached with the principle of building a future where everyone, who live within the national unity and borders of Myanmar, has equal rights. The reasons for this problem which concerns all fractions of the community in Myanmar and intrinsically humanity itself should be researched and presented properly. It is important that International actors develop a constructive relationship with two main sides of the problem, which are Myanmar and Bangladesh, for a solution.

Moreover, organizing supportive movements which can help people of Myanmar get to know and understand each other's religion and ethnicity, is a necessary step. While dealing with the subject, ASEAN, a regional foundation which includes Myanmar as a member, has to involve Bangladesh, which hosts a great deal of Rohingya and is considerably affected by all events in Arakan, in the process. ASEAN must support Bangladesh to prevent the possibility that it might send the refugees back or shut its doors to them lest it should be left alone. As for OIC, it must run organizations with Bangladesh regarding the living conditions of refugees.

The Rohingya mainly live in notably Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, India, the Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia and diaspora in western countries. Evaluations regarding the living conditions of the Rohingya, who live in aforementioned countries, should be made ur-



gently. Because, the most disadvantaged one of all refugee groups is the one that was left to die along the borders of Bangladesh. No projects were developed, or no step was taken to improve the living conditions of refugees in Bangladesh. Movements that are supposed to be on the agenda to help the Rohingya, who were relocated, forced to migrate internally, and stuck in Arakan; return their homes are shaded by the projects of “relief aid to the people who are stuck in camps”. This situation has a resemblance to the way Israel exiled Palestinians to camps and the International Community earned time for Israel by feeding the camps.

It is necessary to prevent the sectorization of this situation and move with a new perspective with which the way the aid is distributed, conveyed to the people and the Rohingya problem will not only be limited to gathering aid. It is a fact that the Rohingya pacified/were pacified at

representing and expressing themselves; therefore, representatives who could find a solution from the inside can't be raised.

Myanmar is a region about which we don't have much information due to the fact that it is far from Turkey and because of wars and crises in our geography. Even so, Turkey has never been indifferent to the problems of the Muslim in this region. From now on, developing a relationship which involves constructive approaches to the unity of Myanmar and the future of people who live there, is essential. In the upcoming process; Turkey's visits that deal with the administration of the country, the continuation of relations between Turkey and Myanmar with approaches that takes unity of Myanmar into the consideration and transferring help for Rohingya's needy people in coordination with Myanmar will contribute to the solution of the humanitarian problem in the region.