



MUSLIM Institute
Mission of Unity, Stability &
Leadership In Muslims

Round Table Discussion on
**Analysing the Current
Situation of Rohingyas**

Organized by
MUSLIM Institute

MUSLIM Institute organized round table discussion titled “Analyzing the Current Situation of Rohingyas” on Wednesday, September 13, 2017, at National Library of Pakistan, Islamabad. Among distinguished guests were former Ambassadors of Pakistan to Myanmar, Mr. Amjad Majeed Abbasi and Mr. Muhammad Qurban, President Rohingya Federation of Arakan, Burma Firdous Sheikh, Assistant Professor Shariah & Law International Islamic University Islamabad Dr. Susic Sejo and Public Relations Coordinator MUSLIM Institute Mr. Tahir Mehmood. Mr. Tahir Mehmood also moderated the proceedings. University professors and students, researchers, activists and journalists participated in the program.



The speakers observed as following:

While looking into the current state of Rohingya community, one came to know that a severe human catastrophe has happened in Myanmar's state of Rakhine. There are around 1.2 million Rohingya Muslims who have been deprived of their nationality. They are considered as stateless and have been the victim of ethnic clashes and military operations. Violence against Rohingya Muslims is not a recent phenomenon. It is erupting periodically and every eruption has been worse than the previous one. It dates back to 1960s and 70s when, during the military rule, suppression and mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims happened. They are being deprived of basic human rights and dwell in ghetto-like camps which lack basic human rights like the right to education, work, travel, marriage, religion and health. Although rich in natural resources yet Rakhine state is one of the poorest states in Myanmar.



Since 1970s, a number of crack downs have forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee their homes and have often been victims of rape, torture, arson and murder. More than 50 thousand houses have been burnt and almost 1600 villages have been wiped out .The recent violence backed by military came into spotlight in 2012. Violence erupted on the pretext of killing of a Burmese Woman which was never tried in the court of law. Almost 2000 Rohingyas were slaughtered with the support of military and the government. The main reason was the malicious intents of the government to push Rohingya Muslims out of major cities of Rakhine state to refugee's camps. The evil nexus of Monks and the Generals of army is main culprit behind this issue. Since then, situation cannot be pacified. Similarly, the violence has been intensified in 2015 and currently in 2017. Rohingya Muslims are being lynched and slaughtered. They have been dragged out of their homes. Now, there is almost no Muslim left behind in capital Sittwe and major cities of Rakhine states. They have been pushed into refugee camps and jungles where pythons and malaria are rampant.

Myanmar considers Rohingyas as illegal migrants from Bangladesh and labels them as stateless. Burmese government claims that Rohingya were brought to Burma by the British as laborers. On the contrary, a lot of evidences are there to prove that Rohingya are the indigenous people of Arakan (currently known as Rakhine) state. There is evidence of presence of Muslims in the Arakan state long before the British came. According to a report published by International State Crime Initiative, The first President of Burma, Sao

Shwe Thaiké claimed in 1959 that the 'Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to the indigenous races of Burma. If they do not belong to the indigenous races, we also cannot be taken as indigenous races'. Burma came into being in 1948. After 1948 till 1962, they were treated as one of the citizens of Myanmar. After 1962, the government passed some laws and claimed that Muslim Rohingya are Bengali in origin. Myanmar's citizenship law of 1982 revoked their nationality and rendered them as stateless.



Even if they would have been considered stateless, in the light of international law about stateless people, their circumstances would have been better. International convention on Stateless people in 1954 confers basic human rights upon stateless persons especially the right to education, health, movement and work. All of these rights have been denied to Rohingya. According to the article 15 of United Nations declarations of Human rights, everyone has the right to nationality. Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, both refugees and local residents have the same status. In 1954 convention of refugees, there are rights for children and protection for refugees. According to article 24 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted in 1966 convention of civil and political rights, every child without any discrimination has the right to acquire a nationality. Right to citizenship/nationality is the fundamental right of each individual, and according to the International human rights laws, prerogative of a state to grant citizenship is not absolute. In this regard, the State must comply with its human rights obligations. There are several resolutions, like Resolution 7/10 (2008), 10/13 (2009), 13/2 (2010), 20/4 on the Right to a Nationality: Women and Children (2012), 20/5 (2012), 26/14 (2014) and 32/5 (2016), where Human Right Council has addressed the enjoyment of citizenship and evasion of statelessness. So, there is no ethical or legal reason to justify the claim of Myanmar's government that Rohingya don't qualify for the right to citizenship.

There are multiple actors involved in destabilizing the region. It must be ascertained that these riots are fueled on the behest of international powers. Muslims run important businesses in the Rakhine state and the government wants to put them down. While the monk Ashin Wirathu is a known criminal and a terrorist. Whatever he speaks is venom and nothing else. He is focused against the Muslims and he has been spreading malice everywhere. Myanmar's government is forcibly pushing Rohingya to the camps and wants to settle Buddhist citizens in Arakan which is a horrible strategy. Sub maximal activity of international powers regarding the issue is distressing. On the other hand, some countries have vested interests in it. Not to speak of the role of UN and other agencies, role played by the Muslims countries is lamentable. There is

heavy responsibility upon international community to help the persecuted communities but substantial progress has not been seen till now.



Pakistan played active role in the past regarding the plights of Rohingya Muslims. At the time of Pakistan's independence, Rohingya community wanted to join Pakistan. Father of Aung San Suu Kyi, Aung San had very good terms with Quaid-e- Azam. He discussed this issue with Quaid-e- Azam and Quaid-e- Azam encouraged that Rohingyas may remain in Myanmar and Aung San ensured their rights. The only country which allowed settlement of Rohingya was Pakistan. However, current government should also enhance its efforts to lessen the predicaments faced by Rohingyas.

There can be no justification of violence against Rohingyas and their persecution. It is a historical issue and is rooted in the domestic laws of Myanmar. The issue should be resolved immediately by providing Rohingya Muslims with justice and human rights. Although in majority, Aung San Suu Kyi is reluctant to take any measure in spite of diplomatic pressure by international community. International community should take immediate measures to pressurize the Myanmar Government to resolve the issue at its earliest. Least of the all, issue of the Rohingya Muslims needs worldwide projection as a humanitarian crisis and the affected people must be dispensed with respite by granting them the rights of citizenship in Myanmar. Similarly, Muslim countries should exert diplomatic pressure on Myanmar's government to stop persecution of Rohingya Muslims.



Recommendations

Following recommendations are extracted from the discussion:

- United Nations especially its Security Council should take immediate and concrete steps to stop persecution and killings of Rohingya people in Myanmar.
- United Nations Human Rights Council (OHCHR) should play its role under the UN charter to provide the right of citizenship to Rohingyas.
- Basic human rights like health, education, travel and work should be provided to the Rohingyas dwelling in the Refugee camps of Bangladesh and other neighboring countries.
- A commission should be formed immediately by United Nations to investigate the crimes perpetrated on Rohingyas. UN observatory mission may also be sent to affected area to monitor the situation.
- United Nations peace keeping missions can also be sent keeping in view of the procedures followed for sending peace keeping missions to different countries.
- The issue of Rohingyas must not be portrayed as a religious issue; it is a humanitarian issue and should be dealt accordingly.
- OIC member countries must play their role through diplomatic channels to resolve the issue and for safe and secure return and rehabilitation of Rohingya refugees, who were forced to migrate from Rakhine state.
- ASEAN organization should arrange the ministerial meeting on security and safety for citizens of its member states and peruse Myanmar to stop violence against Rohingyas.