

INTRUSION OF ROHINGYA PEOPLE IN COX'S BAZAR AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT

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ABSTRACT: Bangladesh is eminent in a very harsh situation about the Rohingya refugee crisis and their repatriation and follows balance diplomacy and her neighbor countries are hushed on the matter of Rohingya. Bangladesh as a host nation of 1.1 million Rohingya refugees faces an environmental degradation for the shelter, sanitation, water management etc. by destroying the forest and hill. For this emergence, it must repatriate the Rohingya in own mother land. The main purposes of this study explore the socio-cultural impact of Cox's Bazar which has been created by Rohingyas living Ukhiya and Teknaf as well as who have been intruded before 2017 and jumbled up with mainstream of local communities. Except those, this study aims to shed light on the process; how they have been entered and settled in mainstream, who helped them to settle here and reasons for their co-operation to Rohingyas.

Key Words: Rohingya, Socio-Cultural Impact, Intrusion, Repatriation, Local Integration.

1. Introduction

Since 1970s, The Rohingya people have been forced to flee across the border to Bangladesh in significance number from northern Rakhine state due to cultural, religious, and political persecution. In 1990's more than 250,000 resided in refugee camp in Bangladesh. In the early 2000s, all but 20,000 of them were repatriated to Myanmar.

At present more than 1.1 Million Rohingyas living in Ukhiya and Teknaf. This already desperate refugee situation worsened dramatically after a violent confrontation between Rohingya insurgents and security forces on 25th August 2017 in the northern part of Rakhine state. Most of the Rohingyas are located along the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar Highway that is parallel to the *Naf River*, which is the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Rohingya are a distinct ethnic, linguistic and religious community from the north-western Rakhine region of Myanmar. It differs significantly in culture and religion from other ethnic groups in Myanmar, particularly the Buddhist majority, and somewhat from Bangladeshis¹.

Bangladesh blamed the Rohingyas for crime and 2012 Ramu violence in Cox's Bazar. Rohingyas have been displacing the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They have been blamed for importing the drug Yabba also. The impact of large influx of Rohingya arriving in a host country can be both positive and negative in effect. It can be positive because of the additional resources and economic assistance that is provided by NGOs and donors, Employment opportunities increase for locals and infrastructural development improves the economy in refugee settlement.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to find out the socio-cultural impact of the Rohingyas living in Cox's Bazar. The question may then be raised; what is social and cultural impacts of Rohingyas to Cox's Bazar? How Rohingys intruded in Bangladesh before 2017? How they could be able to settle here? Who helps them to stay and for what? It is also studies how Rohingyas intruded in Cox's Bazar and how they settled here in mainstream.

3. Methodology of the Study

The topic of the research and objectives require an extensive study into the regimes of international refugee law. An analytical approach was taken in this regard. The research bases on both primary and secondary level data. The primary data consists of relevant international hard laws and soft laws (*lex lata* and *lex ferenda*). Secondary data comprises of prior relevant scholarly works e.g. books, articles in renowned journals and web resources. Interviews of the refugee representatives, officials of the various ministries, the UNHCR at Dhaka and field levels in Cox's Bazar and Maungdaw, and NGOs involved in relief and repatriation would provide important insights. Newspaper reports, journal articles and in-house research reports of aid agencies constitute important secondary source of information for the study.

4. Theoretical Framework

Myanmar considers the Rohingya as illegal migrants in Northern Rakhine State (NRS) and, as such, they are not allowed basic citizenship rights. There is a large body of literature on the history and development of issues involving the Rohingya. Huge Rohingyas are living in Cox's Bazar, it's an extra pressure to government as well as local people. Presence of Rohingya may effects on Social and Cultural aspect of host country. However, this article focuses on entering proccerss to Bangladesh and about their settlement in Cox's Bazar. Socio-Cultural Impacts of Rohingya in Cox's Bazar area also an objective to find out.

Except Ukhiya and Teknaf, about 200,000 Rohingyas are living in the surrounding area of Ramu, Cox's Bazar Pourosova, and other places of Cox's Bazar².

The economic structure, agricultural sector and local livelihoods can be affected by the presence of Rohingya refugees, particularly in large number, because of competition in the labour market and increased price of daily goods. The Rohingya crisis resulted in significant differences in the tourism sector between Cox's Bazar, which became known as a place of refugee camps, and other areas further north in Bangladesh³. They are vulnerable to being recruited by corrupt local politicians who use Rohingya refugees to further their own illegal interests. These kinds of connections can represent a threat to security for local and national level authorities. Rohingyas attempt to acquire illegally a Bangladeshi passport and birth certificate to enable them to gain work in the Middle East. Their involvement in many criminal activities has been documented in a number of studies and widely covered by the news media, which has created a problem for Bangladesh's image internationally. There is a probability that some refugees can be involved in internal political activities of host country and influence the bilateral relationships of the government. Bangladesh is concerned about the political involvement of Rohingyas; for example, one of the ministers of the government, Obaidul Quader, has raised concerns that the extremist group Islamic State may try to conduct militancy in the region and radicalize Rohingya. Refugees pose a threat to internal stability of host country through conflict with local population.⁴

Growing criminal activities of the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar has become a major headache for the local administration and people. Intelligence sources describe them as posing "security threats" for the country as the refugees are allegedly involving themselves with militant organizations operating in and outside the Bangladesh territory.

Almost every day Rohingyas are being arrested with Yaba by Border Guard Bangladesh. The BGB personnel have seized a lot of Yaba tablets worth Taka over 123.75 million from Burma-Bangladesh border within August 2015⁵.

A number of authors have attempted to explain the aggressiveness found among the Rohingya population by pointing to the violence and discrimination they have been subjected to in their lives. Resentment and the desire for revenge against those who have perpetrated atrocities against the displaced Rohingya may pose a serious risk of radicalization by fundamentalist organizations. Consequently, Rohingya may decide to join militant groups, such as Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Ai-Qaeda, Jama'atul Mujahidden Bangladesh (JMB), or Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islam (Huji), which may represent a threat for national and regional security⁶. The Rohingyas refugees are adding extra pressure on the existing crisis of the land and forests in the Cox's Bazar region. Bangladesh has lost considerable area of reserve forest for providing land to the refugees for construction of their shelter. Moreover, the refugees and undocumented Myanmar nationals are regularly cutting off valuable trees and destroying woods in the reserve forests in the Cox's Bazar areas causing serious harm to Bangladesh's environment, ecology and bio-diversity⁷.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

Bangladesh has shows sympathy for Rohingya. But local communities have opposed the decision to allow them to stay among them for any length of time.

There are religious similarities between the local communities and Rohingyas, many local considered them as uneducated, rough and possibly represent a criminal threat to residents. One of the important purposes of this study is to evaluate the impact of the Rohingya Refugees Crisis on the host community. The range of impact depends local conditions and the pattern of refugee-host relationships

5.1 Social Impacts on Local Communities

Local communities of Cox's Bazar expresses their worried during interviews with them. A journalist of local newspaper blamed the Rohingyas as "Yaba dealer" and said they are amplifying the drugs to all over the city. Which is threat for young generation mostly? Annotation of Sub Inspector of local police station about social impact of Rohingyas that Rohingyas are creating more problem in the city and they are involving in crime for money because most of the time they can't find work to lead their livelihood.

Businessman is anxious about their business relating to tourism. Number of Rohingya in city increasing day by day. They also involving with several crimes. It may effects on tourist and tourism.

Interviews were conducted with 6 housewives, 2 of them are very happy about Rohingyas because their sons are working in refugee camp, another 4 housewives explained Rohingyas are living around their resident and most of the time they involved in quarrel with neighbor.

Students are blamed them as 'Crime Doer'. They says all most every day minimum an article publishes about their crime in local newspaper. So; their recommendation to government to arrest Rohingyas who living in city and all check post on Teknaf-Cox's Bazar highway should be more aware about Rohingyas.

Primary data were collected from local communities of Ukhiya and Teknaf 10 out of 30 was students. They are student of Cox's Bazar Government College and Cox's Bazar City College. They are suffering a lot. Driving distance from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf is about 87km⁸ and distance from Ukhiya is 34.5km⁹. Before, they reached to college within 80-100 minutes from Ukhiya and 120-150 minutes from Teknaf. Now, because of Extra vehicles, working for Rohingyas, Vehicles using by NGO's they faces traffic jam and they need one-two hours more extra time to reach their college. Heavy vehicles are using Teknaf-Cox's Bazar Highway, because of heavy and extra vehicles. Many parts of the road are being damaged. Shortage of public vehicles is another problem which effect on their social life. Another complains is their class friends are always make fun by addressing them as "Rohingya".

Farmers lost their Lands; they reported before the recent crisis they had used land for cultivation and grazing their cows, which is not available now. Local people of Ukhiya and Teknaf were free to move around but now they have to carry identity cards. The most alarming issue is Rohingyas are using Smart phones. They even use Bangladeshi sim cards. Which is a question of social security for local people?

They can involve in crime easily through mobile phones. Daily workers lost their regular works due to Rohingya workers. A respondent from Ukhiya said they are leading their life in fear of conflict.

5.2 Violence as a Social Impact

A study by Akhther and Kusakabe¹⁰ shows that gender-based discrimination and violence increased among the Rohingya at Cox's Bazar. As refugees, they are not permitted to search for employment; however, the support provided by the Bangladesh Government and NGOs is limited. This situation leaves Rohingya families with no choice but to supplement their livelihoods 13 through any means possible. Because the movement of Rohingya men is restricted by law due to violence that has occurred in the past, women must often perform menial work outside the refugee camps to support their families. However, the refugee women face humiliation both inside and outside of the home and are vulnerable to violence due to their low position in the family hierarchy and the cultural boundaries or gender-based stereotypes that exist in Muslim society¹¹. A number of authors have attempted to explain the aggressiveness found among the Rohingya population by pointing to the violence and discrimination they have been subjected to in their lives. Resentment and the desire for revenge against those who have perpetrated atrocities against the displaced Rohingya may pose a serious risk of radicalization by fundamentalist organizations¹². Consequently, Rohingya may decide to join militant groups, such as Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Ai-Qaeda, Jama'atul Mujahidden Bangladesh (JMB), or Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islam (Huji), which may represent a threat for national and regional security¹³. According to Wolf's study from the security perspective, Rohingya refugees are encouraged by their situation to disregard the law and order system by involving themselves in criminal activities, such as robbery, arms and drug trafficking, that increases the level of security threat and frustration among the local population¹⁴. They are also vulnerable to being recruited by corrupt local politicians who use Rohingya refugees to further their own illegal interests. These kinds of connections can represent a threat to security for local and national level authorities¹⁵. Rohingyas also attempt to acquire illegally a Bangladeshi passport and birth certificate to enable them to gain work in the Middle East. Their involvement in many criminal activities has been documented in a number of studies and widely covered by the news media, which has created a problem for Bangladesh's image internationally¹⁶.

5.3 Cultural Impact to Cox's Bazar Area

Rohingya is a Muslim minority group; most of the residents of Cox's Bazar are also Muslims. So here is a reason for cultural similarities. But geographically both are different and their cultures are also different. As objective of this study, numerous questions have been asked to respondents relating to cultural changes. A portion of respondent said:

"Rohingyas are uneducated, they don't know how to behave, our children fraternizing with them. Their culture may effect on our children. Few respondents said:"

"Rohingyas are living in camp and who living in city, they don't show them publicly. That is why our children are unable to make friendship with them. So it's not possible to change our culture because of them."

Another respondent Nazmul Hoque said:

“Few Rohingyas are familiar with local criminals, they uses Rohingyas for criminal acts. If it will go on an uncontrolled Situation, or will placed as trend; it may effect on our youths.”

Information gathered from respondents. it seems that still there is no considerable cultural changes in Cox’s Bazar Area, but it’s clear that local communities thinks Rohingyas are aggressive and not respect their superior family member which may effect on family bonding in those families where marital relationship with Rohingyas are exist.

5.4 Instruction and Settling in Cox’s Bazar

Except Ukhiya and Teknaf areas about 200000 Rohingyas are living in the surrounding area of Ramu, Cox’s Bazar Pourosova and other areas.

After 2017, the number of Rohingya influx increasing day by day into mainstream. Primary data was collected through face to face interview with 7 Rohingyas, 5 of them have own Bangladeshi National ID, are living in Cox’s Bazar Pourosova ,they are Siblings .Elder sister Fatema said: She married a Bangladeshi. This marriage arranged by Fatema’s Father and her husband’s uncle. Both are living in Kingdom Saudi Arabia (KSA). She claimed, her family gave her husband 5,00,000 tk during their marriage. Her younger sister is living with them since 2017.

Another respondent’s aged about 60 years. She came to Bangladesh 42 years ago. Her husband was a boatman. He was used to import rice from Myanmar by his boat. The boatman brings her to Bangladesh by his boat easily. Now she is living in Cox’s Bazar. Her husband passed away but she has son, daughters and grandsons.

From 4 male respondents, 2 answered my questions and another 2 respondents were remained silent and tried to avoid me. I could able to build rapport with 2 respondents. One of them came to Bangladesh by a broker. He gave his all money to broker and he is trying to make passport to go abroad, his elder brother also living in abroad. The last respondent said:

He came to Bangladesh through Naf River for better income. His relatives are living in Cox’s Bazar who came 30-50 years ago and now citizen of Bangladesh.

6. Conclusion

There is no refugee law and policy in Bangladesh which incidentally is not a party to be 1951 Refugee convention/1967 protocol. The provision of the municipal law has always been given priority over the customary international law where the existence of domestic law is present. Now already more than 1.3 Million Rohingyas living in Cox’s Bazar .They whelping thousands baby every day. Due to unconsciousness about birth control, this number will be increased rapidly. Growing uncontrolled population will be reason for social problem in Cox’s Bazar.

There are 3 mobile shops in Jamtoli camp. How Rohingyas complete biometric procedure to buy sim card? Recommendation concerning authority to take this matter seriously and seize all mobile phones which uses fake biometric and to ban all mobile shop in camp. During informal discussion in Refugee camp assume that the youths are trying to rearrange a youth organization to tackle against Myanmar. So, suggestion to future researchers to study about Youth Rohingyas daily life and how they passes their time in the refugee camp. It’s also clear from interviews that in most cases. Money is the way to enter into Bangladesh. Several respondents reported that many old entrants have paid bribes to third parties to gain Bangladeshi identification. Fake identification, Passport and fake Sim will be threat for social security of Cox’s Bazar. So, recommendation to Passport office, Cox’s Bazar and Office of Cox’s Bazar Pourosova to take necessary steps to stop all processes of making fake documents and recommendation to local administrative authority of Cox’s Bazar to find out the broker who helps Rohingyas to enter into city and helps to make National Identity, they should be punished for.

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