

# Solution of Rohingya Crisis

## Not only Repatriation

## Think Also about Alternatives

Experts suggested to think about other alternatives instead of considering repatriation as the only solution to the Rohingya crisis. Along with this, they also urged the government to take effective initiative to highlight the present situation and future risks of the Rohingya crisis to the intellectuals and thinkers of different countries. On 13 June, 2019 the daily Samakal and COAST Trust organized a roundtable discussion titled 'Human Dignity of Rohingya: Bangladesh Perspectives'.

Speakers' opinion and suggestions are mentioned in brief bellow:



### **Syed Abul Maksud**

At the outset, thanks to the Samakal and COAST Trust for organizing discussion on such an important issue. There is a common misconception among



the people of Bangladesh that government officials do not fulfill their responsibilities properly. They realize their responsibilities in a dillydally way. This is an overall misconception. While working in different places, I see that, many officers are performing their duties

with great enthusiasm. Personally, they are very sensitive to their duties. Especially, in the Rohingya camps, the description of the role of government officials I have heard so far, is really appreciable. Myanmar's army has carried out violence against Rohingya in Rakhine, it is one of the rare hellish barbarianisms in the history of humanity. The crime of these Rohingyas was their religion, language and ethnic identity. You can notice that, the Rohingyas coming from Myanmar are Muslims, Hindus and Christians. But there is no Buddhist. So, religion is a factor here. There was no other crime. Tortures that have been committed to them in response of this crime, is a terrible crime against humanity. If the Rohingyas are really criminals, then they could have been tried under the existing law of Myanmar. Even there was no objection if they had been sentenced to death with due process. But they (Myanmar government) did not do that. Rather, their atrocities have forced the Rohingyas to flee from their homes. At this moment, Aung San Suu Kyi is the most hated person in the world. Only I am not saying that, the world is saying rather. Many of her past honors have been taken away. Those who honored her, they did it. The government of Bangladesh did not teach them to do so. As far as the criticism is concerned, the government of Bangladesh has established a bright image for Bangladesh in the world with its urgent humanitarian response to the Rohingyas. We have to maintain the sympathy that the people of Bangladesh have shown and the generosity displayed by the Prime Minister by opening the border. Maintaining this harmony is our national duty. Bangladesh is now recognized as a humanitarian country. Of course, thanks to the present government for this.

### **Moderator**

**Mustafiz Shafi**  
Editor in Charge, Samakal

**Rezaul Karim Chowdhury**  
Executive Director, COAST Trust

### **Discussants**

**Syed Abul Maksud**  
Researcher and Columnist

**Mohammad Abul Kalam, NDC**  
The commissioner of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC)

**Steven Corliss**  
Representative of UNHCR in Bangladesh

**Barrister Manzoor Hassan**  
Professor, Center for Peace and Justice  
Brac University

**Shireen Huq**  
Women Rights Activist

**Asif Munier**  
Migration Expert

**Gowhar Naim Wara**  
Disaster Management Expert

**Julfikar Ali Manik**  
Advisor, News section, Boishakhi TV and  
Stringer, New York Times

**Abu Morshed Chowdhury**  
President, Cox's Bazar Chambers of Commerce and Industry

**Saikat Biswas**  
Representative, Inter Sectoral Coordination Group

**Sheuli Sharma**  
Representative, Jago Nari Unnayan Sangstha

### **Md. Mujibul Haque Munir**

In today's discussion, we will mainly search for answers of three questions such as: 1. From the Bangladeshi perspective, how do we continue to ensure human dignity (i.e life-saving needs met,

skills and education-based opportunities) for the Rohingya, as well as provide adequate support to host communities? 2. The scale and scope of the Rohingya crisis requires the full support of the international community-a. How do we keep pressure on Myanmar to create the conditions for sustainable return? b. How can we ensure international support is maintained and, to the extent possible, strengthened? and 3. Two years on from the large influx, what do we see as the best way forward toward solutions, that take into considerations the challenges and possible openings?

### **Mustafiz Shafi**

The Rohingya problem has become a complex social challenge for us. Government level initiative is not enough to solve this problem. Everyone will have to work together.

Bangladesh has created a humanitarian image globally by providing shelter to the Rohingya. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the title of 'Mother of Humanity'. Now if these Rohingya cannot be given humanitarian assistance and dignity, then the proper responsibility is not done. We have to think in terms of our ability too. We cannot feed all of them for the whole life, keeping them idle. For this, we have to take multidimensional initiatives. Pressure must be put on Myanmar. We have to keep the international community with us. But this is a complex problem. We do not think that, in reality, this problem will be solved suddenly. In this case, today's Roundtable discussion can be useful as policy-based assistance. As a responsible newspaper, Samakal does not just finish its responsibilities by only publishing news, it also plays a role in social issues. This event has been organized considering that point of views.



### **Sheuli Sharma**

The host communities have been adversely affected due to the Rohingya influx. It is important to look at how to increase harmony among the Rohingya and host communities. The leader of the Rohingya community is known as 'Majhi'. Usually, men are selected as 'Majhi'. We have made some women 'Majhi'. Such initiatives have been taken to enable women to raise their voices. Rohingya women are very desperate about their future, so there are many risks for them, specially there is high risk of trafficking.



### **Mohammad Abul Kalam, NDC**

There are a lot of differences between the actual reality and the common public perception about the Rohingya crisis. Therefore, the negative connotation of Rohingyas must be rejected. According to my



experience of being associated with this crisis, Rohingyas are very normal, religious, respectful to law. But they are victims of systematic negative campaign and humanitarian disaster by the Myanmar rulers. When we talk about them, we must consider the situation and this must be based

on information. Many Rohingya families came here, had lost all the men of their family, they had been killed, only women members are alive. There are many children whose parents and guardians have not survived. Rohingya camps are now the tragic symbol in the history of humanity. The population of Ukhia are 250 thousand, around 7.5 million Rohingyas came and took refuge here. As a result, the demographics of the area have been changed in recent times. It's important to understand how

dangerous this pressure is, and what kind of premonition it is giving for future. It is not right that the Rohingyas are involved with crimes. For example, Yaba drug had been trafficked in the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf areas, and the main smugglers were all Bangladeshi. Now some Rohingyas are working as their carrier. That's why Rohingyas cannot be left unemployed. If there is no work, then the risk of getting involved in criminal activities will be increased

#### Steven Corliss

The theme for the event is human dignity. It was respect for human dignity that led the honourable Prime Minister to allow the Rohingya people from Myanmar enter Bangladesh. This is why she has been called the "Mother of Humanity." Few countries have received so many refugees and the people of Bangladesh, as a nation, can take pride in that and we must continue to support them. Human dignity means recognising that the Rohingya are people, like you and me. They have mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. They have friends. They have dreams and hopes and aspirations. We need to take care not to label or stigmatise the Rohingya. Bangladesh has given the Rohingya protection – basic safety – but also a new level of human dignity. Conditions in the camps are not ideal. But there is something new in the lives of the Rohingya. They can gather. They can discuss. They are volunteering in the community. There are community outreach volunteers to reach out to those who are vulnerable and ensure that they can access assistance and services. There are safety unit volunteers who are the first to respond whether there is any land slide or other natural calamity. There are protection emergency response teams that ensure children are not separated during natural disasters. The Rohingya are taking responsibility – as much as they can – for their own lives. Despite all the hardships, they are building a community. They are experiencing a new level of human dignity that was not possible in Myanmar. The persecution and discrimination of the Rohingya started in Myanmar and that is where the solutions are to be found. UNHCR is also committed to the goal of voluntary return in safety and dignity, most importantly because this is what the refugees tell us they want.



#### Barrister Manzoor Hassan

Incidents like Rohingya influx in Bangladesh are not the first of its kind in the world. A large number of migrants are already there in many countries. These countries have their own experience in dealing with these situations. We can learn from those experiences. The large part of Rohingya people are young. If we are not able to properly manage them, it can be a cause of great anxiety. There is a Bangla proverb which says, an idle brain is the devil's workshop. So, their employment should be considered. The Rohingyas should get opportunity to participate in decision making process. Problems of Rohingya and host communities must be heard. Opportunity to talk can create opportunity to solve crisis. So, providing opportunity of raising voices is important.

#### Shireen Huq

Myanmar does not have willingness in the repatriation of Rohingya. They have been able to force them to be displaced. Bangladesh has played a servile role in the issue of Myanmar. Their airplanes have trespassed our airspace. Bangladesh might be afraid of the stronger military power of Myanmar. That's why our diplomatic efforts should have been greater. Bangladesh should have not gone for bilateral diplomacy with Myanmar regarding Rohingya crisis. Multilateral activities at



the international level could have been more effective. Still, we are not running out of time. Here the key is in China's hands. So, Bangladesh's all-party delegation visit to China can be arranged. There are Chinese interests in the sea. China will have to use the 'Principal of Responsibility'. India is considered as Bangladesh's friend, but it is also not supporting Bangladesh in Rohingya issue. This proves what kind of a friend India is for us! The future of Rohingya women and children is very critical, they have to be given opportunities for education. The education centers that are being run for Rohingya children are established with a very short-term consideration. In the current situation, long-term education centers should be introduced so that the children of all ages can get proper education. Rohingya youths need to be skilled with technical knowledges. Girls can be work as health workers, they should be trained on health protection and should be involved with productive works, so that they do not cling to traffickers and militants. It can be arranged by planting ten trees by each Rohingya family. When they return, those trees will be considered as part of their contribution to Bangladesh.

#### Asif Munier

Initiatives have been taken to rehabilitate Rohingyas to Bhasanchar. But to rehabilitate all Rohingya, 10-15 such Bhasanchar islands will be needed. Whether Bangladesh has that ability? - it is a big question now. In such a situation, it is necessary to think about how the Rohingya issue can be tackled with the own resources of Bangladesh, as well as diplomatic initiatives must be in place to repatriate them also to other countries. Campaign should be strengthened on the success story created by providing shelters to the Rohingya. Social changes have been taken place at local level during the last two years due to Rohingya influx. Changes in language and behavior have come. Bangladeshi and Rohingyas are now in a confronting situation. It's normal. The common perception that, Rohingyas are getting more benefits- has to be addressed. Efforts are needed to change the mentality of the host communities. The overall impact on Bangladesh must also be identified. Foreigners are coming with new technologies, but where are these technologies going? There may also be an overall 'criminalization'. The people who are managing Rohingyas, are Bangladeshi. It is necessary to have a research center on these. Chattogram University and other higher education institutions have to be utilized. The government will have to take a multi-year plan to get an overall response.



#### Gowhar Naim Wara

Many negative news have been published against Rohingyas. But the way the Rohingyas, including women and others, have adapted in a hostile environment, is really unbelievable. It is not possible to repatriate all Rohingyas, this is the reality. Now long-term planning is needed for them.

The government will have to take steps to involve the civil society in the 'Track two Diplomacy' or alternative diplomatic activities, so that Rohingyas can be repatriated in a third country using the opportunity of rehabilitation and labour migration. Emphasize should be given on the rehabilitation of Rohingyas in third countries. Canada expressed its interest to take some children, but why did we refuse that offer? Can we not sit with intellectuals of India and China regarding Rohingyas? There should arrangement to use rain water more instead of ground water in the Rohingya camps.



There should be dried fish instead of pulses in the relief list. Thus, the local dry fish producers can get income.

#### Julfikar Ali Manik

I am working as a journalist for 29 years and working on the Rohingya issue for 20 years. About 20 thousand Rohingya came in Bangladesh in 2004. I worked with that issue then. Many people told me, 'is it an issue to work?' Now why we are so much vocal with the same Rohingya issue? Then it was not an issue, but it has

become a critical issue now. The concern is in fact 15 years old. We all slept during that time. We wake up only when there is an issue, we sleep until an issue is emerged! Here's the result. Everyone, including diplomats, civil societies, journalists are responsible for this.

The reality is, Myanmar will never take Rohingyas back. Now the matter of concern is how Bangladesh will deal with this crisis. What will happen to our people due to Rohingyas? If Cox's Bazar become a 'Zone of Conflict' in the future, then what will be our excuse to the next generation? Therefore, it is not only the responsibility of the government, all the concerned people have the responsibility to tackle this crisis. In many cases, we have given refuge to the Rohingyas for religious reasons, not from the view of humanity. Whether they would provide shelter if they were not Muslims or Hindus? Now those who are talking about human rights of Rohingyas, responsibilities of these 1 million people will have to be shared among them. In other words, it will be wise to take Rohingyas in third country.

#### Abu Morshed Chowdhury

Historical number of Rohingya influx occurred in 2017. We gave shelter to 10 million Rohingyas due to humanity. It has multidimensional in the societies of the host communities. Rehabilitation of all Rohingya is

not very easy. The 1992 repatriation agreement was not sustainable. Bilateral agreement was weak. So, we want sustainable repatriation. The Rohingyas should be given the opportunity to contribute to the local market considering it as a productive force. Thus, they can act as a force to keep Cox's Bazar economy moving forward. They have to be provided skill development training, initiative should be there to utilize them as human resources. They have to be developed until they're back. It is important to look at how this disaster can be utilized as an economic opportunity.

#### Saikat Biswas

Handling Rohingyas is a huge task. After the genocide in Myanmar, 40 thousand Rohingyas came to Bangladesh in a single day. People from the host community jumped to save lives of Rohingyas. The development agency, the local administration tried. In the first two weeks there was messy management. After that, it came under a nice management. A total of 149 NGOs are working there. We're coordinating, UN agencies are also there. After the crisis began, assistance was immediately sought from the world. Later, for the assistance of Rohingya, last year, as part of the 'Joint Response Plan', we applied for US \$ 951 million. We got \$ 660 million. This year, 920 million US dollars have been requested. So far, 22% of the request have been received. More funds will come in future too. For this, the efforts to promote the issue to donors should be continued.



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