



STATELESS, IDENTITYLESS, PERSECUTED
THE ROHINGYA MUSLIMS



INTRODUCTION

The Rohingyas... One of the world's most persecuted, excluded ethnic group, stateless, identityless and unwanted.

In August 2017, a deadly crackdown by Myanmar's army on Rohingya Muslims caused one of the many exodus that has been going on since 1970s. Over 1 million Rohingya who has been living in the Rakhine (formerly known as Arakhan) for generations, have been forcibly displaced. More than 914,000 are currently settled on a narrow strip of hilly land below the city of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Bordering with Bangladesh, Rakhine State is situated on the western coast of Myanmar with the Naf River being the border inbetween. Around 3.2 million people live in Rakhine state, with the majority of the population being ethnic Rakhine and predominately Buddhist.

Among 135 ethnic minority groups living in Myanmar, Rohingyas are the second largest minority. They have their own Rohingya dialect, culture and are Muslim by faith. However, unlike hundreds of other ethnic groups, the Rohingyas are not allowed to have citizenship and even excluded from the 2014 Burmese census, refusing to recognise them as a people. For the Rohingyas in Rakhine State of Myanmar, it is forbidden to travel, to do trading, to build concrete buildings or to study in schools.

Discrimination against the Rohingyas has been increasing since Myanmar's independence in 1948. Per-

ceived as illegal immigrants brought by British colonisers from Bangladesh, they have been incrementally stripped of their political rights. In addition to discriminatory policies, there have been regular outbreaks of violence and attacks by the Burmese army and the local Buddhist mobs which has resulted in gross human right violations. Rohingyas arriving in Bangladesh said they fled after troops, backed by local Buddhist mobs, responded by burning their villages and attacking and killing civilians. Amnesty International says the Myanmar military also raped and abused Rohingya women and girls. A report published by UN investigators in August 2018 accused Myanmar's military of carrying out mass killings and rapes with "genocidal intent".

As a result of the mounting discrimination and the regular outbreak of violence against Rohingya civilians, they risked everything to escape by sea or on foot crossing the Naf River across to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazaar city. In terms of escalation this is the greatest mass exodus since 1944 Rwandan genocide.

In 2021 this humanitarian crises which is described as "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" by the United Nations will be entering its fifth year with the global pandemic, devastating fires and floods cause by cyclones in Bay of Bengal.



Image 1

With the last exodus which started in 2017 caused massive numbers of refugees flee to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazaar city. Considering the tens of thousands of refugees who had to migrate for the same reasons in previous years, there are more than a dozen hastily established refugee camps in the border city of Bangladesh. Kutupalong, the largest refugee settlement in the world according to UNHCR, is home to more than 600,000 refugees alone. Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 2

Naf River which is a natural borderline between Myanmar (Burma) witnessed hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing from Myanmar to Bangladesh.
Teknaf, Bangladesh.



Image 3

Hundreds of refugees including men, women and children queuing to receive food handouts distributed by a Turkish aid agency at Balukhali Camp, Balukhali Camp, Ukha, Bangladesh



Image 4

More than 100 NGOs carry out relief activities in refugee camps established around Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. The collective efforts of the humanitarian community are organized and controlled by the Government of Bangladesh.

Here: A Bangladeshi soldier checks the ration cards of refugees in line for food aid. Jamtoli Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh.



Image 5

Bamboo which is a traditional construction material in Bangladesh used for shelters, medical facilities, bridges, steps and handrails in the camp because it is cost-effective and grows naturally in Bangladesh. However, due to the need to scale up the response rapidly as more and more families kept pouring in, organisations were forced to rely on young bamboo that is more susceptible to attack by insects, including the boring beetle in this case. Gumdum Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 6

Make-shift shelters which were built quickly after arriving to Bangladesh need to be replaced by bamboo which is a traditional construction material in Bangladesh.

Here: Two Rohingya man working together to built a family shelter from Bamboo tree. Gumdum Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 7

A young Rohingya woman resting with her small child in a make-shift shelter. Often, these shelters are shared by two or more other families. Shamlapur Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 8

For women who survived the massacre and exile in Myanmar but lost their husbands, fathers or children, the difficulties of life continue with food, shelter and health problems in refugee camps. Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 9

There are almost 500.000 Rohingya children who are in need of assistance according to UNICEF. When the Rohingya refugee crisis began, malnutrition was considered one of the biggest threats facing young children. Most had fled one of the poorest regions of Myanmar and endured an arduous journey with little to sustain them.

Here: Rohingya children with food bowls in hands waiting for food aid distribution. Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 10

Due to massive number of people the camps host, access to food or other humanitarian aid is extremely challenging and require hours of waiting in queues under the scorching sun. Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 11

Especially during the monsoon season, the entire camp area turns into a muddy sea. Barefoot Rohingya refugees including children and women pictured as they stand in a queue while waiting to receive food in Balukhali camp, Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 12

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene—known collectively as WASH—includes the provision of safe water for drinking, washing and domestic activities; the safe removal of waste (toilets and waste disposal); and the promotion of healthy behavioural practices. Most Rohingya's lack access to WASH facilities.

Here: A young Rohingya kid running towards a makeshift toilet with a bucket of water in his hand. Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 13

Although the lands where the camps are set up have underground resources rich in water, these underwater resources are very prone to pollution due to the lack of sewer infrastructure and hygienic conditions.

Here: A young Rohingya boy helps his older sister washing their clothes at the water well built by charities.



Image 14

A Rohingya man having a bath outside his makeshift shelter in Gumdum Refugee Camp, Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Image 15

A Rohingya barber shaves a customer in a barber shop at Balukhali refugee camp in Ukhia, Bangladesh.



Image 16

A Rohingya woman cooking food inside the makeshift shelter in Balukhali Refugee Camp, Ukha, Bangladesh



Image 17

Two Rohingya children reading the Holy Qur'an by the window inside the Madrasa (Islamic school), benefiting from the daylight. Balukhali Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 18

An old Rohingya man cries as he tells how Myanmar soldiers murdered all his family including his grandchildren.
Balukhali Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 19

A young Rohingya girl with red veil stares with eyes full of uncertainty and fear as she tells about her experiences during her flee from Myanmar. Balukhali Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh



Image 20

A Rohingya woman looking out of her newly built bamboo shelter with the help of a Turkish NGO as her husband continue to improve the shack. Balukhali Refugee Camp, Ukhia, Bangladesh.



ENIS YÜCEL

BIO


Enis Yücel is an international assignment & humanitarian photographer born in Istanbul, Turkey. Currently based in Kiev, Ukraine.

He has been doing humanitarian and social photography more than a decade, often focusing on capturing the human condition in the regions with humanitarian crises with the aim of reflecting their social and economical status and struggles to wider audiences.

He completed Steve McCurry's photography master class and received training from award-winning photographers such as David DuChemin, Sorin Onisor. He has involved in humanitarian projects with local and international NGOs such as Goethe-Institut, IHH - International Humanitarian Relief Foundation. He is also a contributing photographer to magazines, SilverKris Magazine, Destinations Magazine, Conde Nast, Bayer Chemicals, Singapore Airlines.

'Learning to Walk: Over Again' is a part of longer project about Syrian refugees, has been exhibited in Istanbul, Munich and Berlin in cooperation with LHS Munich Cultural Center, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and also published as a book as a part of Cultural Relief Program conducted by Goethe Institut.

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