



# General Assembly of the United Nations



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## Letter from the President

Esteemed delegates,

My name is Marina Latariya, and I am honored to be the President of the General Assembly at the Žilina Model United Nations 2018. I have been an active member of the Model United Nations society in Slovakia for several years and can, based on my past experiences, call ZaMUN one of the best MUN Conferences I have ever attended.

This year's topic of the General Assembly was chosen specifically to target issues and problems the modern world faces today. The Rohingya Crisis is one of the biggest and fastest growing crisis of our time. The importance of the solution of this issue is of the highest priority of the international community in order to prevent another mass exodus of the Rohingya and any further escalation of the conflict.

I advise all delegates to thoughtfully research this topic with the help of this study guide and the recommended readings at the end. The study guide is only the first contact the delegates have with the chosen topic, that is why I encourage the delegates to prepare their positions to accurately represent the countries they have been assigned with.

I am looking forward to ZaMUN 2018 and meeting all of you. For any further questions regarding the topic, how to write a Position Paper, the country position or any other inquiries, please contact me at this email address: [marina.latariya@icloud.com](mailto:marina.latariya@icloud.com).

Best regards,

Marina Latariya

President of the General Assembly

## Introduction

August 2017 was marked with a tragedy that impacted thousands of people that has since grown into one of the biggest refugee crisis in recent times. The Rohingya Crisis was sparked on the 25th August 2017 with an unexpected military action by the Myanmar military services that has been called a „textbook example of ethnic cleansing“ by the United Nations. Thousands of civilians of the Rohingya minority were forced to flee from their homes and cross into Bangladesh for safety.

The animosity towards the Rohingya minority in Myanmar is an ongoing issue. The government of Myanmar is refusing to recognize the Rohingya minority and is refusing to grant them citizenship, even going as far as excluding them from the 2014 census. The 2017 attack on the Rohingya minority is the most recent of a history of abuses the Rohingya people had to suffer under the hands of the Myanmar government.

At least 6 700 Rohingya, including 730 children were killed during August 2017 attack. The Myanmar government grossly underestimates the death toll of the attack and has stated that they ceased any further operations. This statement has been negated by BBC correspondents in the area, stating the operations continued.

It is crucial for the United Nations to come to a conclusive solution to this issue in order to prevent any further suffering of the Rohingya people and also to create a precedence for any similar situations in the future.

## 1. Understanding the UNGA

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 193 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

The Assembly meets from September to December each year, and thereafter from January to August, as required, including to take up outstanding reports from the Fourth and Fifth Committees. Also during the resumed part of the session, the Assembly considers current issues of critical importance to the international community in the form of High-level Thematic Debates organized by the President of the General Assembly in consultation with the membership.

During that period, the Assembly traditionally also conducts informal consultations on a wide range of substantive topics, including on UN reform-related matters.

The Assembly is empowered to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has also initiated actions—political, economic, humanitarian, social and legal—which have affected the lives of millions of people throughout the world. The landmark Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, reflect the commitment of Member States to reach specific goals to attain peace, security and disarmament along with development and poverty eradication; to safeguard human rights and promote the rule of law; to protect our common environment; to meet the special needs of Africa; and to strengthen the United Nations.

In September 2015, the Assembly agreed on a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, contained in the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (resolution 70/1).

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States;
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament;
- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it;
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields;

- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries;
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.

The Assembly may also take action in cases of a threat to the peace, breach of peace or act of aggression, when the Security Council has failed to act owing to the negative vote of a permanent member. In such instances, according to its “Uniting for peace” resolution of 3 November 1950, the Assembly may consider the matter immediately and recommend to its Members collective measures to maintain or restore international peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>



## 2. Understanding the topic

The brewing refugee crisis still in progress in Myanmar is a complex topic, which can only be understood by analyzing the roots of the aggression of the Myanmar citizens towards the Rohingya minority. The Rohingya are often described as “*the world’s most prosecuted minority*” which is a testament to the long years of struggles and animosity these people had to suffer through.

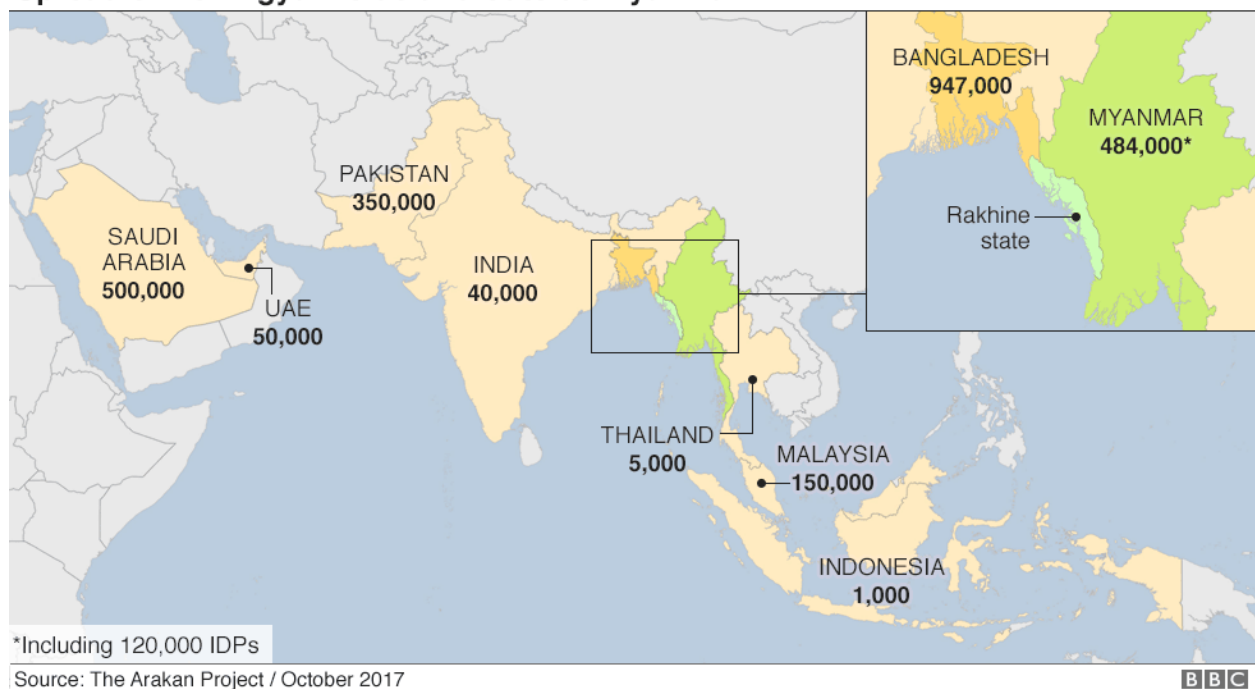
The government of Myanmar considers the Rohingya to be laborers from India and Bangladesh, who migrated to Myanmar, then a province of India, during the British Rule from 1824- 1948. However, the Rohingya, who possess their own language and culture, state they have been the inhabitants of Myanmar for generations. This inconsistency of the historical origin of the Rohingya has contributed to the hatred of the minority by the citizens of Myanmar, who view them as nothing more than migrants in their territory. Another point of conflict is the fact that the Rohingya are a Muslim minority in a predominantly Buddhist Myanmar.

After gaining independence from the British Rule in 1948, Myanmar passed the Union Citizenship Act, which listed all the minorities, which could gain citizenship of the newly independent Myanmar, the Rohingya were excluded from this list, however the Act made it possible for the Rohingya who lived in Myanmar for more than two generations to get identity cards. The years following the independence were peaceful for the Rohingya and offered them new opportunities in Myanmar, some even served in parliament during this time. Unfortunately, this status quo didn’t last long. After the military coup in 1962 it was mandatory for all citizens of Myanmar to get national registration cards, however the Rohingya citizens were given foreign cards in order to separate them from the citizens of

Myanmar. These foreign cards restricted the Rohingyas access to education, health aid and specific job opportunities. Another strike at the Rohingya came in 1982 after a new citizenship law was passed, which took away all the previously granted liberties to the Rohingya, making the whole Rohingya population stateless. The law restricts the Rohingyas rights to vote, marry, practice their religion and excludes them from specific professions.

The forceful migration of the Rohingya has been an issue since the 1970s after the first military coup in Myanmar. Thousands of refugees have since fled Myanmar in order to protect their lives and livelihoods.

#### Spread of Rohingya inside and outside Myanmar



There have been numerous instances of armed conflicts between the Rohingya minority and the general population of Myanmar. Here are a few examples of the most recent ones, leading to the August 2017 crisis:

### 2.1. The May 2012-April 2013 Attacks

This specific conflict was sparked by the rape and murder of a 28-year old Arakanese woman (Arakanese people are a recognized ethnic minority in Myanmar, who are predominantly located in the Rakhine State, which is also home to the Rohingya minority) by three Muslim men on May 28, 2012 in the Ramri Township in the Rakhine State. The men were brought to justice and sentenced to death, however this outcome wasn't satisfactory to the Arakanese people. The Arakanese retaliated on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 by stopping a bus, which was driving 10 Muslim men to a government checkpoint. Hundreds of Arakanese citizens forced the men out of the bus and proceeded in beating them to death while nearby army soldiers and police watched without any action. After the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Massacre the government appoints an investigation committee in order to find out the cause of the massacre without any success. Meanwhile the conflicts spread to other part of the Rakhine State. More killings take place, among which is the murder of an Arakanese citizen by Rohingya residence in a village riot. The Rohingya and the Arakanese clash in arson attacks and killings which are not only not prevented by the state security, but in some instances the state security forces side with the Arakanese and carry out attacks against the Rohingya. The then president Thein Sein calls a state of emergency on June 10, tasking the state security forces in establishing order and ending the attacks. Later on, the President states the only solution to the problem is the relocation of the illegal Rohingya into other countries in the region or the refugee camps operated by the UNHCR, this proposal is rejected by the UNHCR. The government's plans to stop the violence are ineffective, which leads to the October 21-24 simultaneous violence in nine townships in the Rakhine State towards the Muslim population. The state security forces reprise their action from the previous attacks by siding with the Arakanese and displacing more than 40 000 Muslims in the region. The death toll of the

October attacks are estimated to be 70 Muslims out of which 28 were children. The government grossly understates the number of victims and denies the state's involvement in the violence. The attacks on the Muslim minority have decreased since April 2013, however they have not ceased. The violence against the Muslim minority of 2012 have still gone unpunished and unresolved, with the government refusing to investigate the issue further.

## 2.2. The October 2016 attack on police officials

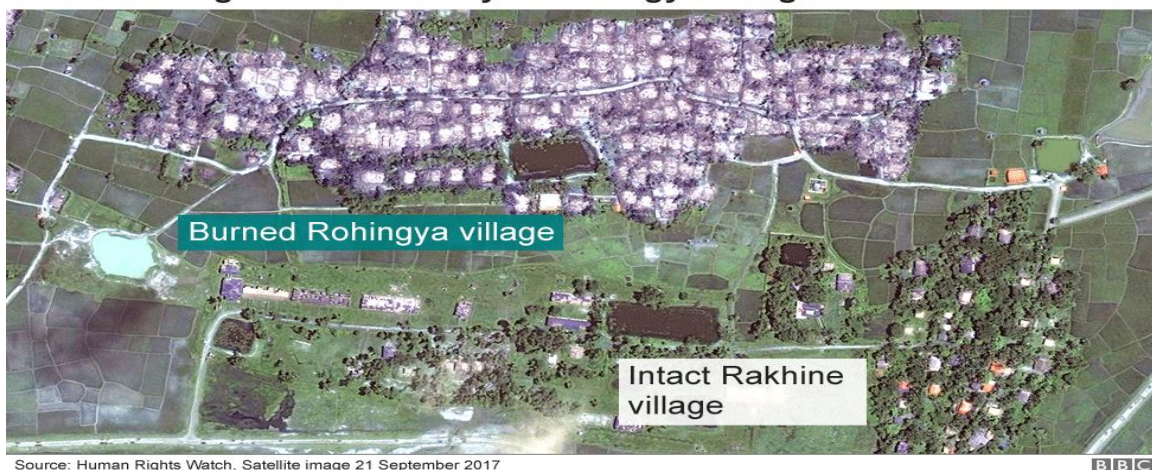
The October 2016 attacks on three police outposts in the Rakhine State, killing nine police officers has been the largest attacks since the May 2012 violence. The Myanmar government reported 9 border police officers dead and 4 wounded presumably by a Muslim insurgent group. The Myanmar police department stated the attacks were coordinated and aimed at looting the police outpost for guns and ammunitions. The Myanmar government blamed the attack on the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) a small militant group active in the 1980-90s, however the group is believed to be inactive for decades, which doesn't stop the Myanmar government in blaming numerous violent attacks on them in the recent years. A report issued by the International Crisis Group states there is no evidence the attacks were carried out by the Rohingya Solidarity Organization.

The October attacks sparked a security crackdown on the Rakhine Region populated by the Rohingya minority, further restricting the Rohingyas basic human rights. The government troops were accused of an array of human rights abuses during the crackdown, which were all denied by the Myanmar government.

### 2.3. The August 2017 Violence

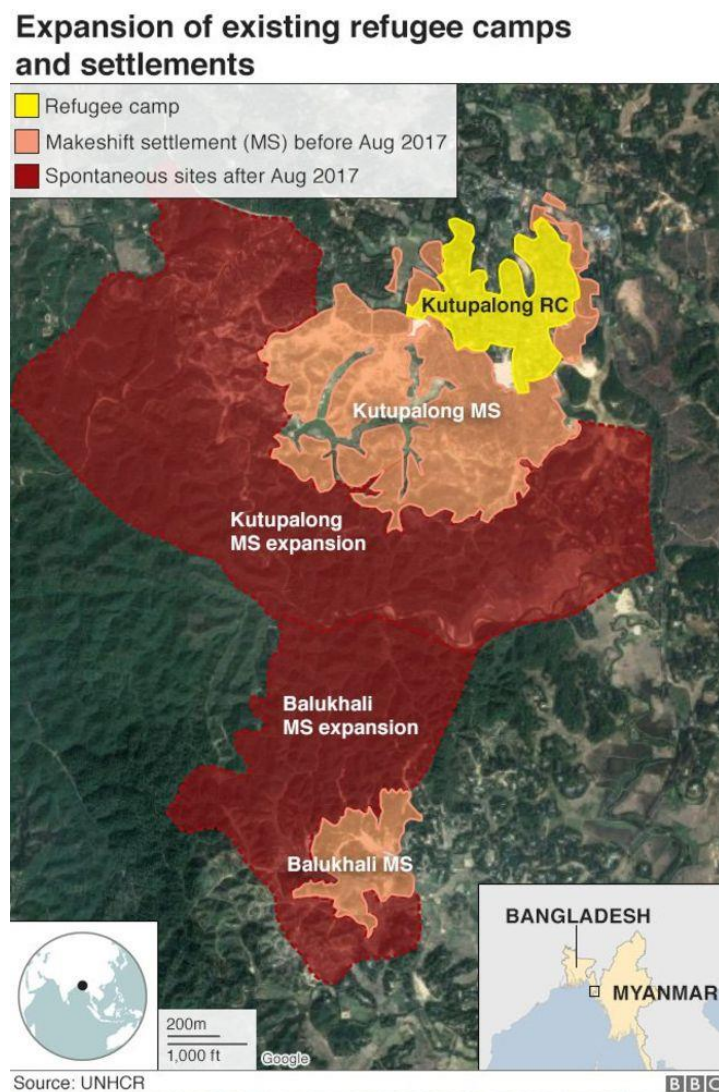
The August 2017 violence leading to the exodus of more than 650 000 Rohingya from the Rakhine State into nearby countries, was sparked by the attacks on police and army posts by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The Myanmar government declared ARSA a terrorist organization after the attacks and launched what is described as a direct ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority in the Rakhine State. The National Army Troops descended on the Rakhine State burning and pillaging the Rohingya villages on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2017. At least 288 villages were destroyed and burned since the August 2017 attacks started. The survivors stated that the security forces fired at will on anyone, burned entire villages with people trapped in their homes, sexually assaulted women and girls and conducted many other unspeakable atrocities. Human Right experts state that the violence conducted in August 2017 has evidence of genocide – *“defined as the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a group of people based on their nationality, ethnicity, race or faith”* (Solomon, 2017) A minimum of 6 700 Rohingya were killed during the attack since August 2017 till September 2017 including at least 730 children according to the data gathered by the international medical charity Doctors Without Borders.

**Satellite images show destroyed Rohingya village**





The Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh were at first met with animosity from the Bangladesh Border Guard, which was instructed to turn the refugees back. Hundreds of refugees die during their crossing of the Naf river separating Myanmar and Bangladesh in order to be met with guns pointed at them by the Border Guard. After protests of Bangladesh citizens to let the refugees in the government changes it's stance and allows the refugees entrance into the refugee camps already overflowing with Rohingya. The UN reports serious shortages of humanitarian aid in the overcrowded camps with high risk of infectious disease epidemics.



## In conclusion

The Rohingya crisis of 2017 as stated by the UN is “the fastest growing refugee crisis”. The violent actions of the Myanmar Government and their refusal to rectify the decade long animosity towards the Rohingya are unacceptable.

The Rohingya crisis is still an ongoing issue, which calls for immediate action by the Member States. The looming humanitarian crisis in the refugee camps on the Bangladesh – Myanmar border has to be addressed, as well as the future of the Rohingya. The Myanmar governments actions towards the Rohingya minority have to be investigated, also the position of the Rohingya minority in the Myanmar society has to be considered as a factor for change. The Rohingya have the right to be recognized as an official minority in Myanmar, which would give them all the rights and privileges of the other recognized minorities. The unfavorable economic situation of the Rakhine State directly influenced by the government in order to “push the Rohingya out of the country” has to be rectified in order for the region to establish balance. Many other steps both from the international community and the Myanmar government have to be made in order to prevent another exodus.

The international community has to come together in order to act as a united front in order to address this issue as effectively as possible.

Further Reading:

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/10/myanmar-nine-police-killed-insurgents-bangladesh-border>

<http://time.com/5031342/bangladesh-myanmar-rohingya-refugee-crisis/>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/12/asia/rohingya-crisis-timeline/index.html>

<https://thewire.in/179759/rohingya-myanmar-timeline/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883>

**UN Resolutions and Statements:**

[https://undocs.org/S/RES/2106\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2106(2013))

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13055.doc.htm>

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- The Guardian. (2016). Myanmar says nine police killed by insurgents on Bangladesh border. *The Guardian*.