

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”
– Warsan Shire

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE NCAS DESK

Moral Deficit in the age of Realpolitik



Yarmouk (2016), Abdallah Al Omari (Source: <http://www.abdallaomari.com/thevulnerabilityseries/>)

Abdallah Al-Omari, a Syrian artist, painted a series called the ‘Vulnerability Series’ featuring world leaders as refugees. In the words of Al-Omari, **“I wanted to take away their power not to serve me and my pain but to give those leaders back their humanity and the audience an insight into what the power of vulnerability can achieve”**.

At a point in time when the world is facing a series of refugee crises, it is important for nations to determine if divisive factors like religion, ethnicity and nationality should matter more than the need to protect fellow humans from atrocities.

Do write to us with your feedback and suggestions at interface@ncasindia.org

In solidarity

Team NCAS

Moral Deficit in the Age of Realpolitik



Figure 1 Illustration: Craig Stephens (Source: South China Sea Post)

The ethical dilemma faced by a nation when deciding on the treatment of refugees is increasingly becoming common in the 21st century. Due to the various waves of democratization in the past century and the keen eye of the media, this ethical dilemma, one would expect, would have huge consequences on a country's final decision. Surprisingly, with increasing geopolitical concerns being added to the context, the dilemma is often resolved through a 'realpolitik' approach, denying them refuge with the rationale of it being a 'national security concern'.

In India, the Supreme Court was asked by the Centre to not entertain a plea filed by lawyer Prashant Bhushan against the deportation of Rohingya Muslims. The affidavit filed by the Centre stated that the influx of Rohingya has huge ramifications for India's national security and that intelligence inputs suggest that they are a threat to India's internal security. Around 40,000 Rohingya are said to be in India, of whom the illegal immigrants are at risk of being deported. India started Operation Insaaniyat to assist Bangladesh with 53 tonnes of food supplies and medical aid for the refugees present there.

Bangladesh has received most of the refugees but is unwilling to help considering that Myanmar is not financing Bangladesh's refugee camps and nor is Bangladesh able to keep the rate of influx. The Home Secretary recently commented, "We will give aid agencies access. But we are not interested to give them shelter here. We are already overburdened".

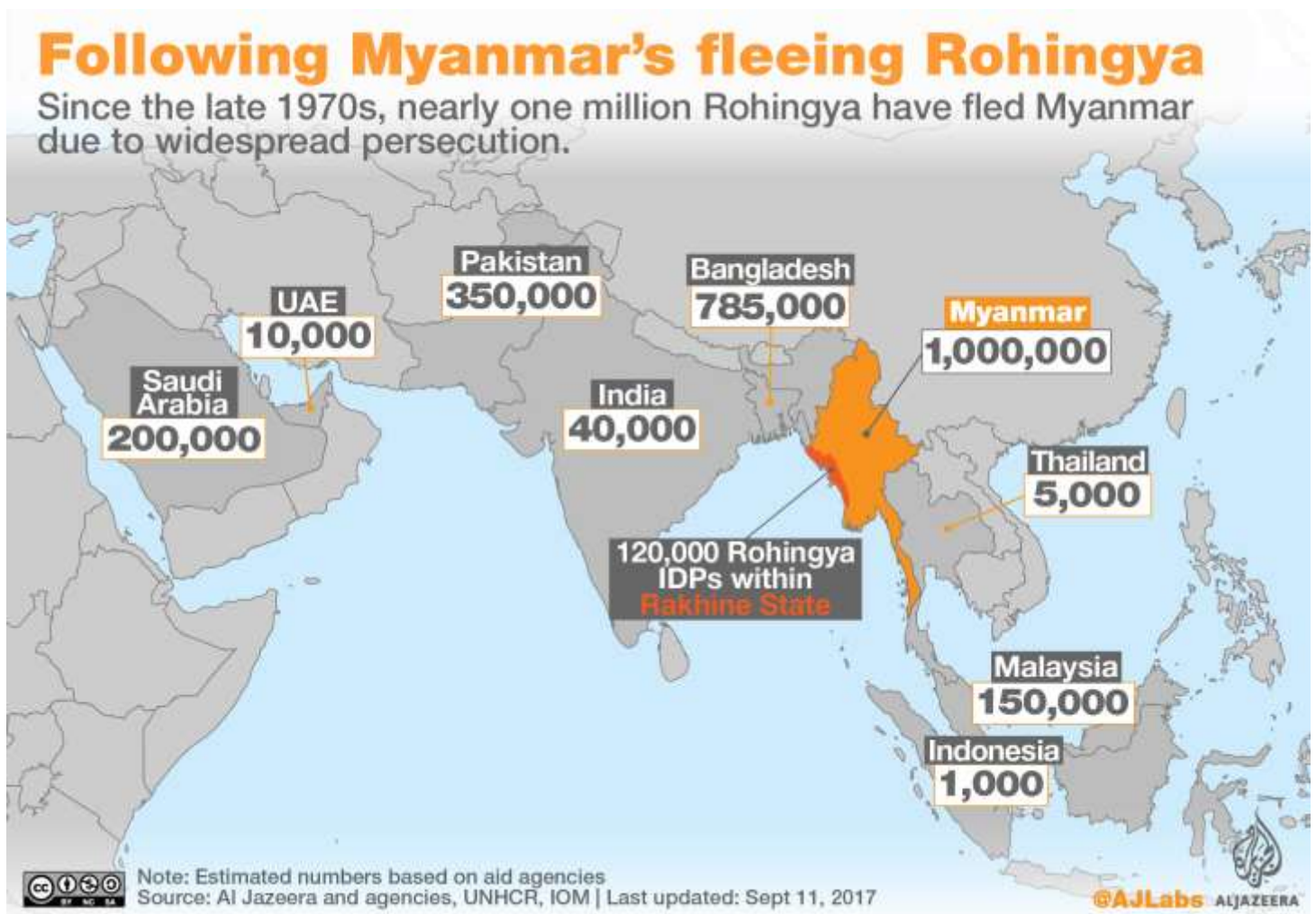
China too was interested helping out the nearly 150,000 Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh in the last few years, though China did not want to upset the Myanmar government since China is investing heavily in Myanmar.

Indonesia is home to the largest number of Muslims in the world and it has been witnessing severe domestic backlash against the crisis. The Myanmar embassy has been attacked and a foreign representative has been sent to Myanmar to hold talks with the government on measures to reduce the violence against Rohingya. In addition, they have sent a representative to Bangladesh to ensure additional aid to refugees there.

The Malaysian government has in the past kept Rohingya from seeking refuge in the country like other ASEAN countries, but it has recently agreed to provide temporary shelter to Rohingya. Malaysia, like Thailand and Indonesia, has not signed the United Nations Refugee Convention, making refugees their illegal immigrants. Malaysia too is sending aid to Bangladesh for refugees present there.

Thailand, a known international hub of human trafficking, has in the past refused Rohingya to settle in. Recently it was also discovered that several Rohingya who did enter Thailand had been trafficked and several of them killed. In spite of this, several Rohingya try to make their way to Thailand in search of peace. Thailand has recently agreed to take in some Rohingya for a short period of time. But this concerns some human right activists who have noted that Thai officials have shipped Rohingya into international waters with little food and amenities.

The status of the stateless Rohingya is a modern tragedy, with very few countries actively helping them. A concern for a large majority of them is the satisfaction of the Myanmar government which plays a major role in maintaining strategic ties in the region. When geopolitical interests supersede humanitarian concerns, the concerns of the poor, helpless, oppressed communities take a back-seat in policy formulation. This is an apt time for everyone to introspect on the ethics we want our institutions to maintain. The rights-based discourse takes a beating if realpolitik is the method of formulating foreign policy. The ineptitude of the international laws to provide safeguards in this context is also worth noting considering that despite some countries having ratified the U.N Refugee Convention, they are unwilling to accept refugees.



(Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-Muslims-170831065142812.html>)

UPDATES



1) Chhattisgarh Workshop (pictured above to the left)-

On 8th and 9th September, 2017, capacity development workshops were conducted for the tribes of Pahadi Korwa, which were situated in the remote areas on the issue of PESA and Forest Rights Act under the CLM project at Ambikapur in Sarguja district of Chhattisgarh, workshop was conducted by Sandip Patnaik of NCAS

2) CLM conducted for Katkaris and other Adivasis (pictured above to the right)-

NCAS, along with Adivasi Sahaj Shikshan Parivar (ASSP) organized CLMs for PVTGS and other tribes regarding the Biodiversity Act on the 15th and 16th of September. We held Biodiversity Management Community Capacity Building and Biodiversity Registration for both ASSP and the tribals. We trained the Gram nchayattoo Parth Bapat and Reshma Bedekar conducted the sessions.

3) Panchayat Raj Workshop At Yuva Centre, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai

NCAS and Mahila Rajsatta Andolan organized 3 day workshop on Panchayat Raj advocacy for women Sarpanch and women Gram Panchayat members at Yuva centre, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai on 16 to 18 September, 2017. Around 30 participants from 10 different districts in Maharashtra participated in the workshop. The main objective of this workshop was to understand Advocacy and Gram Panchayat Development Plan. Mr. Amit Narkar and Ms. Himani Pathak from NCAS and Mr. Bhim Raskar, Mr. Datta Gurav, Mr. Chetan Wagh, Ms. Malatitai Sagnae from Mahila Rajsatta Aandolan took the sessions.

Upcoming Events and Publications

Events

- 1) National Conference on Development and Governance of Adivasis in Contemporary India, jointly organized by NCAS and Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Contemporary Studies, Mumbai University, October 6-7th, 2017
- 2) Community Learning Movement (CLM) Workshop, Orissa, 17-18th October 2017

Publications

- 1) NCAS Series on Sustainable Development Goals-Mind the Gap
- 2) NCAS Series of Discussion Papers on Nutrition and Foods Security
- 3) Status Report on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in India

In loving memory of Gauri Lankesh who respected the importance of dissent in democracy and stood against forces which tried to silence her.



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