

YUNMUN XXVIII

CSW Topic 2: Status of Female Rohingya Victims of Myanmar Conflict

The internal conflict in Myanmar is categorized as recurring uprisings within the country. Having begun in 1948 shortly after Myanmar gained independence from the United Kingdom, it is one of the world's longest running civil wars.¹ While the conflict in Myanmar has a long and complicated history, our area of focus will be the status of the female Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

The Rohingya people are an ethnic minority situated in the northern Rakhine State of Myanmar. Despite there being historical proof for a Rohingya presence in Myanmar since the 8th century, the Rohingya people are denied citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar nationality law, thereby restricting their rights and privileges in the country.²

Beginning in 2017, the Rohingya people have been victims of what Amnesty International has described as an "ethnic cleansing" campaign. The Myanmar military are pillaging and burning villages, subjecting the inhabitants to violent and sexual abuse and forcing as many as 400,000 men, women, and children to flee to Bangladesh. The Myanmar leadership, specifically Aung San Suu Kyi, have refrained from direct involvement in the ethnic cleansing³.

During times of armed conflict, women are affected differently, and sometimes to a greater degree, than men. Female victims are all too often subject to sexual violence, leaving lasting physical and psychological damage. In addition, female victims and refugees often lack access to specific health care such as reproductive health services, leading to pregnancy and birth complications⁴.

The issues surrounding the female victims of the Rohingya ethnic cleansing are distinct from those of other armed conflicts. Myanmar officials have denied reports of rape in the Rakhine state, categorizing the reports as anti-military

¹ Patrick Winn (13 May 2012). "Myanmar: ending the world's longest-running civil war". Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Retrieved 27 March 2013.

² "Burma: Events of 2016." Human Rights Watch. Viewed Sept. 27th 2017. Web. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/burma#f3ec3e>

³ Lewis, Simon & Wilkes, Tommy. "U.N Medics see evidence of rape in Myanmar army "cleansing" campaign." Reuters. Sept. 24th 2017. Viewed on Sept. 28th 2017. Web. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-rape-insight/u-n-medics-see-evidence-of-rape-in-myanmar-army-cleansing-campaign-idUSKCN1BZ06X>

⁴ Susan McKay (1998) The Effects of Armed Conflict on Girls and Women, Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 4:4, 381-392

propaganda⁵. Additionally, most Rohingya women in need of health care have now fled to displaced-person's camps in Bangladesh, expanding the domain of the issue at hand.

In your research and preparations for the conference, do your best to hone in on a few main areas of interest for CSW. Begin by evaluating your country's position on the armed conflict in Myanmar; this will assist in your understanding of the more in depth research. Has your country made any attempts to offer relief effort in general? Does your country support the Myanmar leadership in their semi-supportive silence?

Continue by assessing the best way to address the inhumane acts of sexual violence occurring against the Rohingya people. Rape during times of armed conflict was unanimously categorized a war crime and a crime against humanity by the Security Council resolution 1820. While it is not under our jurisdiction to apprehend and try instigators of this crime, we can think about methods of rehabilitation for those women who were victims. Who is responsible for providing the proper physical and mental health care required to help rape victims? How do we best ensure successful programs during such a precarious time in such an unstable region?

Lastly, focus on the insufficient female health care in DP camps in which so many Rohingya refugees find themselves. How should CSW assess in which specific medical areas resources are lacking? Again, who is responsible for providing this care? Consider the lack of awareness for the plight of Rohingya refugees, and how raising awareness could be instrumental in solidifying funds and resources to begin serious relief work.

It is important to remember that sanctions on Myanmar and efforts to end the ethnic cleansing are neither under our jurisdiction nor our prerogative for this discussion. Ending the armed conflict in Myanmar is a long term goal of the United Nations, however, in CSW we will be focusing on the more focused issues delineated above.

Please note that the situation in Myanmar is rooted in a long and complex history of internal insurgencies that impacts today's conflict. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the background, and your country's previous involvement. Be

⁵Lewis, Simon & Wilkes, Tommy. "U.N Medics see evidence of rape in Myanmar army "cleansing" campaign." Reuters. Sept. 24th 2017. Viewed on Sept. 28th 2017. Web. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-rape-insight/u-n-medics-see-evidence-of-rape-in-myanmar-army-cleansing-campaign-idUSKCN1BZ06X>

diligent and deliberate in your research, and come prepared to participate in respectful and riveting debate with your fellow delegates. If you are having trouble, begin by perusing the articles cited above in the topic paper. Feel free to contact me with any questions about the topic or the conference in general at lgelman@mail.yu.edu.

Looking forward to working with you!

Lilly Gelman
Chair, CSW XXVIII