



Sexual violence against women in the rohingya crisis as a tool of genocide: An empirical impression

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Abstract

In the Rohingya crisis, women in particular suffered greatly. Countless women have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence which has been used as one of the deadliest weapons of war or as a tool of terror. The purpose of this paper is to describe the persecution of Rohingya women. They also suffered from sexual abuse, maltreatment, inflammation, sterilization, and genital mutilation. Rohingya women were forcibly exploited for nudity and at the same time sexually abused in front of their family members. During a military operation, women were first taken hostage; young girls were taken hostage, and then taken to a separate room where they were forcibly gang-raped. The military has banned some Islamic traditions, such as the wearing of the burqua by women, and marrying according to religious rites, in order to publicly humiliate Rohingya women.

Keywords: rohingya, rape, gang rape, sexual violence, genocide, Myanmar, suu kyi

Introduction

The Rohingya are an ethnic, linguistic and Muslim minority group in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar. Rohingya refugees are known as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world. The Myanmar government has revoked their citizenship, leaving them refugees and stateless in their own country and stumbling to seek refuge in various countries. No country is ready to recognize them as its citizens. Myanmar's military government revoked the citizenship law in 1982, revoking the citizenship of the Rohingyas and expelling them from the country's 135 official ethnic groups. The Myanmar government has argued that the Rohingya are foreigners who have migrated from Bangladesh. They call them "illegal immigrants" or "Bengalis".

The Citizenship Amendment Act of 1982 has completely banned travel, limited education, low employment opportunities and access to citizenship for Rohingya over the last four decades. The Rohingya have been subjected to other forms of exploitation, including forced labor, illegal detention, land confiscation and eviction. These restrictions resulted in, over time, very limited access to essential health and social services and reduced political participation^[1]. The Myanmar government's motive behind all this was to persecute the Rohingya and isolate them.

Many waves of violence against the Rohingya have erupted over the decades, such as in 1942, 1978, 1991-92, 1996, 2012, 2016 and most recently in August 2017 which was much larger and more dangerous than previous violent movements. The violence erupted on August 25, 2017 when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked police posts in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state. It was a Rohingya rebel group active in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar. More than two dozen soldiers were killed in the attack. Following allegations of brutal attacks on ARSA groups, he came forward and claimed that he was conducting defensive operations in 25 different locations and accused government soldiers of raping and killing Muslim women and civilians. A spokesman for the ARSA group said the attack was aimed at drawing international

attention to the plight of the Rohingya minority. Several international organizations have condemned the ARSA attack and the United States has called on Myanmar security forces to refrain from using indiscriminate force in retaliation^[2].

The Myanmar government secretly planned to attack Rohingya villages in retaliation for the ARSA attack on the Rohingya community. To implement this plan, on 27 August, the Myanmar army deployed more than 35,000 troops in the Rakhine state and brought all the necessary military equipment. Rohingya people were warned that if they did not leave their homes, the army would burn down all the villages and their homes^[3]. During the cleaning operation, the army has cracked around 362 Rohingya villages in Rakhine state, killing more than 10,000 Rohingya. Troops burned down their homes; if anyone tried to flee, they were shot in the back. The army searched every house and hurled hand grenades at their homes and used knives to cut the throats of the injured, Rohingya children and the elderly were thrown into the fire, most of their skin melted with acid^[4].

The Myanmar government has not only violated the human rights of Rohingya men but has also spared Rohingya women, children, pregnant women and the elderly. In the Rohingya crisis, women in particular suffered greatly. Countless women and girls have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence, which has been used as one of the most deadly weapons of war or a means of terror^[5]. The international media has a number of documents that provide evidence of widespread planned rape of Rohingya women against Myanmar's military and police forces, as well as other sexual assaults on women and young girls. There was also violence against Rohingya men and boys. They also suffered from sexual abuse, mutilation, burning, sterilization, and genital mutilation. Rohingya women were forcibly exploited for nudity and at the same time women were sexually abused in front of their family members. Sexual violence against Rohingya women has been going on for years. Myanmar's military forces have used sexual violence against Rohingya women as a weapon^[6]. Fed up

with the Myanmar government's ethnic cleansing operation, around 1.1 million Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh and other neighboring countries to save their lives.

Research Methodology

For this research paper, information has been collected for analysis from both primary and secondary sources. During my empirical study, primary data has been collected through face-to-face interviews of Rohingya refugees and first hand inspections of Rohingya camps located in different villages of Punjab and Haryana state. I interviewed 74 respondents in a fieldwork with a semi-organized interview questionnaire and got the answers. I have a set of questionnaires for the informants before my empirical study but I generalized my questions when additional information was needed during the interview session. My research paper uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze sexual violence against Rohingya women as a tool of genocide.

A. Sampling

Prior to the interview session, my sample for gathering information from Rohingya was based on various factors. I tried to choose the sample that fully represents the Rohingya population. Regarding the sampling technique, I preferred non-probability sampling; among the four type of non-probability sampling, I preferred purposive sampling for my research paper to collect data. I have used this purposive sampling to judge selected members of the population that can help provide accurate information about research. I have focused the interview study on the recruitment of sexual violence and mass murder from violence. I included interviewers, some of whom were physically injured, many of whom appeared to be healthy and uninjured, ready to describe their experiences and provide information about events. I sought to investigate possible human rights violations, sexual abuse, and torture, and mass murder, destruction of their property and large-scale flight of Rohingya from Myanmar to neighboring countries as refugees.

B. Data Collection

During my collection of Rohingya refugee data, I had to choose a specific place where they are currently living in India. I found that according to UNHCR, about 42,000 Rohingyas are living in different states of India like Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad, Assam, West Bengal and Kerala. My first priority for data collection was Punjab and Haryana. Then I selected some villages in the state of Punjab and Haryana where Rohingya refugees live. Rohingyas are living in different villages of Mohali like Jaula Khurd, Kheri Gujran, MKR Kheri Gujran, Samgoli and Behra villages. The interview languages were Hindi, English and Rohingya. Some Rohingyas could speak Hindi and others could only speak Rohingya. I interviewed with the help of an interpreter who could speak both language of Hindi and Rohingya. The interviews involved 74 out of 200 Rohingya respondents from various villages in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung townships. I mostly interviewed survivors of "sexual violence" in Rakhine State in 2017 and eyewitnesses who helped me to ensure the accuracy of the data collection. Rohingya women supported me during the interviews and

many Rohingya women who were victims of rape and gang rape were interviewed. They answered my questions without hesitation and told the whole story of sexual violence.

Objective of the study

In the study, we have included attempts to discuss sexual violence, rape, gang rape by Myanmar's military, police and radical non-Rohingya civilians. Some of the other objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study have to bear which type of sexual harassment.
- To examine the sexual humiliation of women.
- To analysis the mutilation of reproductive organ of women.
- To study the causes of rape and gang rape with women.
- To identify military use sexual violence as tool of genocide.
- To observe marriage restriction and two child policies.

Results

During the interview I interviewed 74 respondents in which I talked about the torture and ill-treatment meted out to them but my main focus was on the Rohingya who have been victims of sexual violence such as rape, gang rape and sexual harassment. Among them are 3 respondents who were gang raped by the Myanmar army and 9 respondents whose family members were gang raped by the army in front of their eyes, including someone's sister, mother, aunt etc. There were 26 respondents who reported that our family members had been raped by police, army and non-Rohingya civilians. The soldiers would pick us up and take us to their military camps where they would rape us. Many responsible witnesses testify that in some cases, in front of our family members, they were raped with intent to harass. In addition, 34 respondents testified that we and our family members were not raped. But we were subjected to a lot of sexual abuse because the army deliberately touched us, touched our genitals and made fun of us, harassing us as much as possible. Table 1 is cited and provides information on respondent demographics.

Table 1: show the demographic summary of participants

| Sr. No | Category of Sexual Violence | Respondents |
|--------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Rape with self | 2 |
| 2 | Gang rape with self | 3 |
| 3 | Rape with family members | 26 |
| 4 | Gang rape with family members | 9 |
| 5 | Sexual harassment | 34 |

Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide

Rape and sexual violence are often interpreted as the birthright of a wartime state and conflict state. However, the opposite is often true of genocidal regimes, where the destruction of a group is a major objective. Rape and sexual violence are used with intent to destroy people or as part of a policy and are sometimes referred to as "gang rape". Rape of women during atrocities is in itself a part of oppression and an extension of control and power over a group. Sexual violence against women serves some genocidal agendas, including forced pregnancies and forced sterilization. More broadly, sexual violence involves a complex category of crime. It may include but is not limited to; Degradation, forced nudity, intentional HIV transmission, and threats of sexual violence [7].

Similar incidents of sexual violence have been reported against Rohingya women. Rohingya women have been subjected to horrific acts of sexual violence by the Myanmar's military and police in the Rakhine state. The widespread threat and use of sexual violence during military 'Clearance Operations' in October 2016 and August 2017 was unleashed. The Rohingya community was forced to flee their homeland to humiliate, terrorize and collectively punish them. And their return was completely banned.

During the 'clearance operation' against the Rohingya in 2017, the rates of sexual violence against women increased manifold. The main goal of sexual violence against women during the Rohingya genocide was to eliminate a certain group of people from an area. In addition, gang sexual assault on a target group of women was a major target of genocide as it forced the target group to flee the area of terror [8]. The UN special envoy on sexual violence in the conflict called it "a mathematical tool of terror aimed at destroying and eradicating the Rohingya as a group". In April 2018, Myanmar's military was added to the UN Secretary-General's "list of shame", a register of national armed forces and armed groups whose members are suspected of sexual harassment. A United Nations survey of refugees in Bangladesh found that 52% of women reported being victims of rape or other forms of sexual violence [9].

Rohingya Women victim of Gang Rape

A form of mass rape and sexual violence against Rohingya women by the Myanmar's military has been widely covered. This was often accompanied by murder, beatings and other abuse against both the victim and other family members. Soldiers openly were gang-raped in various cases; many respondents have seen or experienced various forms of gang rape against both minors and adults [10]. During military attacks on Rohingya homes, they first took women hostage, then picked up young girls from among the hostages, took them to a separate room, and then forcibly gang-raped them. Sometimes they were raped in front of their families or in public.

During the rape, she was physically assaulted until she died. The Rohingya women also accused the soldiers of tampering with their genitals and inhumanely beating them, which resulted in the deaths of the girls. Soldiers used to celebrate this moment with the soldiers of their company and they were often heard saying that they are Muslims, kill those women [11].

Minara Begum [Female, 27 self victim of the gang rape by soldiers] described her pain during the interview:

"The soldiers forcibly entered my house and beat my family members with guns and then drove them out of the house, then took me to a room where five to six soldiers forcibly gang-raped me," she said which I am unable to describe... "

Rusmatara Bibi [Female, 21 relative of five victims of the gang rape by Myanmar military soldiers] shared her pain during the interview:

"My family was gang-raped by soldiers; my five sisters were abducted by soldiers and kept in a different place, where they were gang-raped. We family members used to go to army camps to pick up our sisters from them. We were abused and beaten and threatened with death. An innocent sister of mine was raped for several days and later burnt. My other younger sister got pregnant because of the lust of the soldiers. While the soldiers attacked our house, they

killed my father. When I tried to stop them, they also hit me, breaking my left arm..."

Afsor Kamal [Male, 28 eyewitness of the gang rape with the young girls in the village] said in the interview:

"The army came to my village and raped 30 girls. The army abducted them. In many cases, these girls were raped in the village and in some were raped other places. Of the 30 abducted girls, 15 died and the rest crossed the Naf River with us to Bangladesh. After arriving at the refugee camps in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, they were admitted to a UNHCR hospital..."

Mass Rape with Rohingya Women

In many cases, Myanmar military soldiers and non-Rohingya civilians gathered Rohingya women and adolescent girls together in groups and then gang-raped them. Respondents described the horrific scene of other women being beaten and gang-raped during a massacre in her Validum village of Maungdaw township.

Khaleda Akhatar [Female, 35, who survived the mass rape in her village]. She said during the interview:

"Soldiers in uniform came to our house and at gunpoint we gathered all the women in one place, then they forcibly took off all our clothes, then all the women in the room were raped, even me..."

Semon Khatoon [Male, 42 eyewitness of the mass rape with the Rohingya women in his village] said during the interview:

"The soldier called us all together and then told us to raise our hands and lower our heads. When I protested, they hit me on the head with a gun, causing me to fall to the ground, then stabbed me several times, knocking me unconscious. Many of the women around me were raped at the same time. When I woke up a long time later, I saw that the condition of the raped women was very serious and critical. They were screaming in pain..."

Sexual Humiliation of Rohingya Women in Public

In this section, Myanmar's military and security forces have examined ways to publicly humiliate Rohingya women. In some Islamic traditions, Rohingya Muslim women, as a sign of humility, wear a burqa (a long gown used by Muslim women to cover their entire body), an outer garment that covers their body and face. The army and security forces took off the burqa to humiliate and disgrace the Rohingya women. Rohingya women were also banned from covering their faces and bodies with burqa.

Shuna Miya [Male, 35 eyewitness of sexual humiliation of teenage Rohingya girl in his neighbor] explained in the interview:

"Soldiers came to my village and forcibly evicted all the Rohingya women from their homes and took off their burqa and clothes. At that time a 16 year old Rohingya girl was menstruating and she used a rag to cover her genital area. The soldiers forced her to take the rag off, laughed at her, and made obscene comments and gestures in front of other villagers..."

The Myanmar's authority enacted many of the strictest rules that Rohingyas could not follow. Men and women had to meet a number of conditions to get a marriage certificate, which was required from the state government. These rules were in stark contrast to their religious beliefs, many of which were very painful. According to the authority's rules, Rohingya women had to undergo a pregnancy test before

issuing a marriage certificate and demanded big bribe to issue a marriage certificate to them. If a couple performed a marriage ceremony under Islamic law, they would be arrested and sent to prison. Due to these strict rules of the Myanmar government, Rohingya men and women could not marry or live together. In addition, the Myanmar government has adopted a number of policies to control the Rohingya population and to restrict freedom of movement, marriage and childbearing. In Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships where the largest Rohingya population lived, no Rohingya couple could have more than two children^[12]. If a woman became pregnant after having two children, she would have to face an abortion. Some women refused to have an abortion so they migrated to Bangladesh to have a baby.

The spectator said that the soldiers would strip the women naked and then laugh at them; some soldiers forced naked women and girls to march in front of them; others urinated on them and the soldiers masturbated in front of them^[13]. At the same time, Rohingya women were killed with sharp weapons after being raped. Their bodies were dismembered and burned. His head, face and chest were hit by soldiers with heavy guns and sharp weapons.

The women who survived, fled to Bangladesh, their condition was deplorable as they had been gang-raped, sexually abused and seriously injured. Despite bleeding all over their bodies, they had to run and travel without food or medicine. To save their lives, the pregnant women crossed the Bangladesh border in the rainy season, covering long distances through dense forests, rivers and mountainous areas. Their legs were swollen and their legs were badly bruised. By the time they reached the refugee camps in Bangladesh, their condition had worsened and everyone was upset^[14]. The Myanmar army harassed Rohingya women to such an extent that they had to flee their country.

Injuring of the Reproductive Organs of Women

During the Rohingya crisis, Myanmar forces used widespread sexual violence against Rohingya women, often including gang rape. In addition, the military deliberately targeted pregnant women and used them as a weapon of war. Rohingya women were deliberately made victims by harming their bodies. Women and girls of childbearing age for physical branding of their bodies through military soldier rape, assaults on pregnant women and children, mutilation of their genitals and other injuries, cut marks on their neck, chest and teeth. They made choices in a cohesive way. Pregnant women whose breasts, genitals, or other body parts were mutilated; often when they raped may later be unable to have sex with their husbands^[15].

During the interview, many Rohingya respondents shared their experiences of physical disability and genital injuries. Some of them were victims of him / her and other family members or neighbors. Soldiers first separated men, women, and children. Then, they killed the men. Further, pregnant women were excluded from other women and children; He was hit in the abdomen with a heavy weapon, and ruffled on his genitals in front of other women and children. Some soldiers kicked pregnant women in the abdomen, while others cut open abdomen. They cried out in pain but did not feel sorry for him. Some of these pregnant women lost their pregnancies. Seeing such atrocities created the greatest terror and fear among the people who were forced to witness the plight of pregnant women. Extensive and

systematic use of physical abuse against Rohingya civilian is a crime against humanity.

Murder of Rohingya Women and Children

The number of women and children killed during the military operation against the Rohingya has risen sharply. When soldiers attack Rohingya homes, they see all the women and girls they like; they were taken to a separate room for sex. If they refused to come, the soldiers would pick up their children and torture them until their mother agreed to have sex. In many cases they killed children if their mother refused to have sex.

Mumtaj Begum [32, Female survivor of raped and murder her children during military attack] gave information with very emotional:

"I had four children. My two children were killed by the military right in front of my eyes after I was raped that she said. Two children died when soldiers grabbed their family members and hit them on the head with blood, causing them to bleeding. He died without enduring the pain..."

In addition, there are many cases that have killed her children. Two of the ten respondents had experienced the killing of their family members or relatives and children. Hundreds of other women and children gathered near the Naf River, which divides Myanmar and Bangladesh. The soldiers separated the women and children from the group and ordered them to flee to the river. As they began to flee, bullets rained down on them. Some women tried to avoid being shot; they were thrown into the river to die. The soldiers also threw small children and infants into the river. The soldiers stopped for a moment a few minutes later and shouted at the survivors to stand up, then fired at them and buried their bodies in a mass grave by the river and all the evidence of the massacre to hide the truth^[16]. The operation against Rohingya was preceded on August 30, 2017 by a mass massacre of Rohingya in the village of Tula Toli in the Rakhine state, known as the Tula Toli Massacre. It has been unofficially identified that about 500 women and children were killed in the incident.

Restrictions on Women's Marriage and the Number of Children

The Myanmar government has been formulating various policies from time to time to reduce the population of the Rohingya community and to control them. The authority used Rohingya women to control their fertility. In the mid-1990s, Myanmar's military government introduced a marriage registration policy for the Rohingyas, which was a marriage ban law for the Rohingya community. According to this, if any Rohingya wants to get married, he must first get the marriage registered. The marriage registration fee was so high that it was very difficult for Rohingya to pay. If one pays this fee and registers his / her marriage, his / her certificate will not be issued or it will be too late^[17]. They had to pay a large bribe to get this certificate. At times, the authority flatly refused to issue the certificate without any explanation. They were also forbidden to marry according to Islamic religion. If any Rohingya married according to his religion, the police would arrest him and take him away and keep him in prison for many years.

In addition, the Myanmar government has adopted a policy of not having more than two children for the Rohingya community. No woman can have more than two children. If a woman became pregnant after having two children, she

would be forced to have an abortion. Many Rohingya women were killed in fatal abortions.

Conclusion

This research paper discusses about the human rights violations, sexual violence, rape, torture and murder of Rohingya women. During the Rohingya genocide, Myanmar's military sexually exploited Rohingya women and used it as a weapon. Sexual violence against Rohingya women has been perpetrated by the Myanmar government for many years. This research paper further state this kind of sexual violence of the Rohingya was a policy of war against a particular ethnic group in Myanmar which was a tool of politics. Rape of Rohingya women is a military act and a weapon of genocide. The last part of this research paper shows that after raping Rohingya women, their genitals were damaged, they were stripped naked and walked around in public, and then they were ridiculed. In addition, even Rohingya children were not spared. They were forced to flee their country.

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