



WESTERN APPROACHES TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Background

Since the beginning of the crisis, Canadians were shocked by what happened in Myanmar and Canada has been a strong partner to Bangladesh. The Rohingya crisis has been considered as one of Canada's foreign policy priorities. In that context, Canada is now developing a new 3-year strategy and considering various options to help resolve the crisis. On the other hand, the United States remains the largest single provider of humanitarian assistance worldwide, providing \$9.3 billion in 2019.





Challenges

- i. With the pandemic and the significant escalation of conflict in Rakhine and Chin states between the Arakan army and the Myanmar military, the prospects for Rohingya repatriation have dimmed
- ii. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is deeply divided on Myanmar
- iii. The Canadian government's ability to foster the political and social changes needed in Myanmar varies from country to country, but until now it has been rather limited despite repeated attempts
- iv. The wheels of justice, at both the ICJ and ICC, turn slowly and Canada cannot do much about that either.



Recommendations

- i. Efforts should continue to respond to the humanitarian crisis in both Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- ii. Changing the mindset in Myanmar, both in the government and among the general population, will require patience and coordinated international efforts. Perseverance and persistence should be continued for a voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya.
- iii. Canada has been a strong and consistent advocate for accountability in Myanmar since the onset of the current crisis in August 2017 and it will extend its support to Bangladesh as needed.
- iv. Effective coordination and cooperation should be maintained while working together on multi-year planning and commitments to support those forcibly displaced to have dignity and hope.
- v. The Rohingya should be given livelihood skills, education, portable skills for self-sufficiency to prepare them for voluntary repatriation to Myanmar.
- vi. Bangladesh must gather important partners in the effort to secure Rohingya's rights and repatriation. But they should not be fenced in and completely cut off from the external world.
- i. More efficiency should be demonstrated in the way the camps in Cox's Bazaar are funded and managed by utilizing time, resources, and goodwill.
- ii. Initiatives should be taken to reduce misery, hopelessness, and despair of the Rohingya community to avoid radicalization, criminality, and other anti-social behavior.
- iii. The voice of the Rohingya majority needs to be heard and even amplified. They should be included in events like webinars where they are allowed to share their views.

- iv. The Rohingya have suffered enough hate speech in Myanmar and should not be portrayed as criminals, terrorists or freeloaders.
- v. The motivation, expertise, and sacrifices of the humanitarian workers to help vulnerable populations should be valued.
- vi. As part of international community, pressure on Myanmar should continue to respect human rights, allow unhindered humanitarian access, adhere to the ceasefire, and engage in political dialogue to pursue peace. Such actions must take place in New York, Geneva, The Hague, and here in the region.
- vii. Pressure on Myanmar should also continue to establish conditions to allow for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return of refugees. Stress should be given to implement recommendations from the Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission on Rakhine State for the structural changes necessary to address institutional discrimination and mistrust.
- viii. In regards to easing the plight of the refugees in the short term, restoration of uninterrupted internet access, protection services, livelihoods work, and education programs, even in the time of pandemic is necessary.
- ix. To ease the Government of Bangladesh's burden, consideration should be given to resettlement of the Rohingya to third countries on a larger scale as an alternative to moving them to the Bhasan Char.

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