

The Plight of Rohingya Muslims: Relegated to Oblivion

(Translated)

Al-Rayah Newspaper - Issue 620 - 07/10/2026

By: Ustadh Bilal Al-Muhajir – Wilayah Pakistan

In addressing the plight of the Muslims of Burma (Rohingya) —who suffer at the hands of the country's Buddhist rulers—we do so because, despite sharing neither language nor ethnicity, we are bound to them by the strongest tie on earth: the bond of Islam. The Prophet (saw) said, «مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهِمْ، وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ، وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ، مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى» **“The example of the believers in their mutual love, mercy, and compassion is like that of a single body; when one part of it suffers, the entire body responds with sleeplessness and fever.”** This Hadith, known by heart to Muslims everywhere, does not merely describe their state; it mandates that whenever any one of them suffers, the entire community (جماعة jamaa'ah) must rise to their aid. Consequently, the Rohingya crisis—like other tribulations afflicting the Ummah—must be treated as a wound in the body of the Ummah, necessitating a state of emergency and the fulfillment of all obligations such a state entails.

The Rohingya people are predominantly Muslim and hail from Rakhine State—formerly known as Arakan—in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. Myanmar has a population of approximately 60 million, and the widely cited official estimate places the Muslim population at around 4%—equating to roughly 2.4 million Muslims based on that total figure. However, these statistics are inaccurate or erroneous due to the policies generally pursued in the region; for instance, official figures in India place the Muslim population at no more than 20%, whereas the reality is that the proportion exceeds 40%—double what is reported in the media or recorded in official state statistics.

Naturally, the community of Rohingya people maintains a close bond with the Islamic Ummah; indeed, their ethnic origins encompass both Arab Muslims and the Mughal rulers of India. The term “Rohingya” signifies the inhabitants of Rohang—the prior Islamic name for Arakan. The Rohingya population is concentrated in the historic region of Arakan, an ancient coastal state situated at the crossroads of South Asia and Southeast Asia. Thanks to its coastal location on the Bay of Bengal, Arakan served as a vital hub for maritime trade between Burma and the outside world. Historically, Muslim merchants arriving from Arab lands brought the Risaalah (رسالة message) of Islam to the coastal areas of southeastern Bengal—adjacent to Arakan—as early as the ninth century CE. Over the centuries, these Muslims remained mindful that trade should not cause them to neglect the opportunity to propagate Islam, leading many polytheistic Buddhists to embrace the faith. Thus, the Rohingya people trace their historical origins to that era, and they have remained steadfast in their adherence to Islam to this day.

The root cause of Buddhist hostility toward the Rohingya lies with the malicious British; the peoples of Asia are generally characterized by calmness and peace. Islam ruled the region—including the Indian subcontinent—for centuries without giving rise to revolutions, unrest, or conflicts stemming from sectarian, creedal, or religious divisions. However, when the malicious British arrived to colonize the region, they—true to form—incited tribal, ethnic, and religious tensions. They transformed Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh philosophies from forms of polytheistic mysticism into organized religions, enabling them to pit people of different creeds against one another. This made it easier for the British to exercise tyranny and domination—a favorite tactic of colonialist powers. Thus, another cause of the hostility is creedal; it reflects the words of Allah (swt) Who said, «لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ

أَشْرَكُوا» **“You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers to be the Jews and those mushrikeen who associate others with Allah”** [TMQ Surah Al-Maaidah: 82]. Naturally, Buddhists fall into the category of those who associate others with Allah (swt)—as do the English Christians, who were the root of the region's woes.

The current suffering of our Rohingya brethren began in early 2012, when police started conducting patrols in Rakhine State. Buddhist monks began distributing magazines portraying the Rohingya as terrorists and claiming they would take over the state due to their “uncontrolled” birth rates. They also distributed leaflets in Sittwe—the main Muslim town—declaring, “You must eliminate these people, or else they will seize your land.” The Narzi area, targeted as the largest Muslim neighborhood and an economic hub in Sittwe—home to approximately 10,000 Rohingya—was burned to the ground. Any structures left standing amidst the ruins were subsequently bulldozed.

Persecution flared up again in October 2012, orchestrated and incited by local officials and Buddhist monks. Security forces either stood by and watched the attacks or actively participated in them, while police opened fire on fleeing Rohingya. Thus, the ethnic cleansing campaign carried out by the authorities in Rakhine State became entrenched. In Sittwe, where some 75,000 Rohingya had lived prior to 2012, only 4,000 remained. Following the establishment of the central Rakhine camps in 2012 and 2013, authorities began imposing overlapping systems to restrict Rohingya movement; these measures included checkpoints, barbed-wire fencing, curfews, draconian permit requirements, mandatory police escorts, and daily harassment, threats, extortion, and bribery. The process of ethnic cleansing continued through the events of August 2017, when Myanmar’s security forces destroyed hundreds of Rohingya villages and killed women, men, and children across northern Rakhine State, forcing at least 700,000 people to flee to Bangladesh. The Burmese military summarily executed dozens of Rohingya Muslims in the village of Maung Nu in Rakhine State.

More recently, hostilities between the forces of Myanmar’s military junta and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State reignited in November 2023. Both sides have been responsible for grave violations, including deliberate attacks on civilians, the burning of property, and unlawful recruitment. Approximately 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Rakhine State face persecution and violence; they are confined to camps and villages without freedom of movement and are denied adequate access to food, healthcare, education, and livelihoods.

Although Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَإِنْ اسْتَعْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ﴾ **“And if they seek support from you for the Deen, then you must support”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal: 72], there are no figures today like Al-Mu'tasim, Muhammad bin Qasim, or Aurangzeb Alamgir to answer the Rohingya’s pleas; consequently, they have endured decades of discrimination and oppression under successive Buddhist polytheist (mushrik) rulers. This support will not come from the current rulers of the Muslims, as evidenced by their failure to aid Muslims suffering in Palestine, Occupied Kashmir, India, and East Turkestan.

Worse still, the rulers of Muslims—particularly those of Bangladesh and Malaysia—exacerbate this suffering by forcing these people to live in conditions unfit even for animals, only to expel them back to face their oppressors in Burma.

Yet, the naval forces of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia could easily defeat Burma’s polytheist (mushrik) Buddhist rulers, just as heroic commanders did during the era of Aurangzeb. Undoubtedly, the Islamic Ummah and its armies must remove these rulers—the true enemies of the Ummah—and restore the protective shield of the Islamic system of governance.

The issues facing the Ummah are similar and intertwined, and the suffering is virtually identical; the situation in Arakan mirrors that in Gaza, as does the plight in Kashmir, East Turkestan, and what previously occurred in Chechnya and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is but one solution to all these calamities—a fundamental remedy for the Ummah’s problems. The root of the problem lies in the rulers of Muslims and the regimes that hold the Ummah in a stranglehold; they must be overthrown to pave the way for the appointment of a Khlaleefah (Caliph) who will champion Islam and Muslims across the globe.