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## Rohingya: a Neglected Ethnic, Potential for Nation Development in Myanmar

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### ABSTRACT

There has been discrimination against the human rights of the Rohingya ethnic minority in Myanmar. There have been a number of attempts by the incumbent regime to remove their citizenship status in Myanmar. The world community; caring countries; non-state and other international organizations that are pro-humanity reacted strongly. However, the regime in power did not ignore it, even closed itself off from various responses from various parties and still did not recognize the citizenship status of the Rohingya ethnicity. The question is, why does the ruling regime insist on not recognizing the citizenship status of the Rohingya? Why do regional and international organizations respond to discrimination against the Rohingya?; What ideas are offered to make "ethnicity" a capital for nation building?. The research uses qualitative methods with literature study, sourced from secondary data from documentation and literature. The finding is that the Rohingya ethnic citizenship status that is not recognized can perpetuate the domination of the military regime's power in Myanmar. The international response to discrimination in Myanmar is a form of concern for ensuring the upholding of the pillars of democracy, global security, international law and human rights in Myanmar. A new ideology is needed for tomorrow's generation in order to change the "ethnic faction" into the nation's "development energy"

## INTRODUCTION

Since Myanmar's independence in 1948, there has been large-scale persecution through ethnic cleansing and acts of genocide against the Rohingya. Around 1.5 million Rohingya were forced to leave their homes (Nurul, 2006). Other data shows that starting with a domestic rebellion, then they fled and finally entered illegally into bordering countries, where since 1978, hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fled from Myanmar and headed for neighboring countries (Aris, 2010).

The period of Ne Win's leadership, from 1962 to 1981 had a great influence where Ne Win played a key role in the emergence of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The formation of the NUP party, which is the new name of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), is supported by SLORC. In other words, the NUP party is Ne Win's newest form of authoritarian work (Donald, 2009).

The military junta in Myanmar forced the Rohingya to leave the country or face executions, mass killings, forced labor and deportation, according to Al Amin Rabby in Mohajan (2018). As a result, the Rohingya Muslim minority who are residents who live in Arakan province, northwestern Myanmar, suffer and face ethnic cleansing in their own country.

As Md. Saltman Sohel in Mohajan (2018) states that the Government of Myanmar and Myanmar Buddhists treat Rohingya as ugly animals. Two major operations that seriously threatened the survival of the Rohingya ethnicity were the Naga Min or Dragon King national military operation which was carried out in 1977, as well as the Nasaka operation. Operation Naga Min has carried out killings, rapes, and other offensive activities, resulting in 200,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh (Rahman, 2015).

The Nasaka military operation oversees any inflow of refugees into Myanmar through the border area in North Arakan. Nasaka forces oversee the movement of refugees from Northern Arakan across the Naf river to Bangladesh or vice versa (Irish Center for Human Rights, 2010). The Myanmar government has made various efforts to revoke the Rohingya citizenship status, both through the Union Citizenship Act of 1948 and through the Burma Citizenship Law of 1982. The Rohingyas can not take part in the formation of the nation and are

deprived of their fundamental human rights (Mohajan, 2018 ).

As stateless persons, Rohingya do not have legal rights to the land where they live and work. From 1995 to 2010, the Myanmar government forced the Rohingya to leave Myanmar without taking their belongings, even village leaders in Arakan expelled the Rohingya to minimize tensions between Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine (Nurul, 2006).

However, historical trajectories note that the Rohingya were recognized by the Myanmar government when the government of prime minister U Nu came to power. This is evidenced by their representation in the Myanmar parliament (Nurul, 2006). As U Nu's reign ended and was replaced by the Military Junta regime, the Rohingya were not recognized in the Myanmar constitution. These include the absence of citizenship status, discrimination, unfair treatment, being ostracized, and even persecution (The Equal Rights Trust, 2014).

It seems that this incident is in line with the opinion of General Aung San, a Myanmar independence leader who stated that to maintain political stability in Myanmar is to place the military as a professional body and without involving them in the political arena. This is because the involvement of the military in politics will only endanger the political stability of the State of Myanmar (Mohamad et al., 2010). Discrimination continues, with Myanmar's ruling government passing a law in 1990 requiring all residents of Arakan state to report in order to obtain a marriage license. This law only applies to the entire Muslim population in the area.

Men are prohibited from beards and women are prohibited from wearing headscarves and veils and even Nasaka troops touch Rohingya women to determine whether they are pregnant or not. Rohingya people will even only be given a marriage certificate if they agree not to have more than two children. If violated, Rohingya women will be jailed for up to ten years. All policies related to the marriage of the Rohingya minority group are under the authority of the state.

In 2001, a group of mobs attacked at least 28 mosques and religious schools, the state security did not try to stop these actions, but participated in destroying them (Lowenstein, 2015). Based on Human Rights Watch data in 2002, the government issued orders to the military to destroy unauthorized mosques. Several mosques and Islamic schools were

closed and used as government administrative offices.

Arakan State issued a policy document in 2008 on "Population Control Activities" (Lemere, Maggie, and West, Zoe, 2015). This policy aims to limit the growth of the Rohingya population and prevent the birth of Rohingya children. In 2015 the population in the country covering an area of 653,290 Km<sup>2</sup> was 52,680,726 people and in 2020 it has reached 54,409,800 people (Worldometer, 2020).

In 2009, government authorities ordered most Rohingya households in rural areas to send family members once or twice a week to work as night guards. The financial difficulties of the Rohingya cause them to be forced to work without compensation, this is a manifestation of the violation of Human Rights against the Rohingya ethnicity.

General elections in 2010, have ushered in Thein Sein as the new leader in Myanmar. Then Sein's leadership and control are expected to reduce the suffering of his Rohingya ethnicity because Thein Sein was elected as the first civilian president for the victory of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in the 2010 elections.

However, during Thein Sein's reign, policies related to efforts to control the growth of the Rohingya population continued. This action is based on the government's fear of the growing Muslim population which will affect the political and economic power of the majority Buddhist population.

Myanmar's defense minister expressed concern in September 2001 that the Rohingya birth rate was moving fast beyond international standards. The phrase was presented at a military training presentation entitled "Fear of Extinction of Race" which expressed fear of the growing Muslim population that would outnumber the Buddhist population.

Besides, the fear of population growth as a result of the Muslim population infiltrating illegally at the border will only increase the number of Muslim residents (Lowenstein, 2015). The 2015 election was won by the National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by Aung San Suu Kyi. This election was judged as a fairly fair election by various circles. The NLD party won 57.1% of the vote while the USDP party was only about 28.2% of the vote. The victory of Aung San Suu Kyi from the

NLD party, as a reformist figure to this day, is only a big hope for the Rohingya ethnic that continues.

Since 1989, the United States has criticized the policies of the Myanmar military government and sent humanitarian aid to Myanmar. The European Union has also put pressure on the UN to pay attention to the Myanmar crisis which must be resolved under the United Nations Human Rights Protection Commission in Geneva in 1998. On 5 November 1993, UNHCR representatives signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SLORC, to ensure UN access to refugees returning to Arakan (Ragland, 1994).

The assistance carried out by the UN through UNHCR is a form of protection assistance provided as a result of the high level of human rights violations that occur in Myanmar as well as providing financial assistance for stateless persons in Myanmar. UNHCR's main partners in Myanmar will continue to be in the Ministry of Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Border Region Advancement and National Race and Development Affairs.

UNHCR focuses on issues of international protection throughout Myanmar as well as refugees. UNHCR assistance to stateless residents in North Arakan has been allocated since 2009. Every year the assistance provided by UNHCR increases, because aid is not only distributed to Arakan state but also to refugees in Kachin state and Shan state.

In 2015, officials from the UN refugee agency Volker Türk visited Myanmar to see the condition of the Rohingya, Türk held discussions with U Khin Yi, the Minister of Immigration and Population and government officials and members of parliament. UNHCR stands ready to assist all governments in the region including those from Myanmar. The key solution is that both the government and the people should promote peaceful coexistence in Arakan state (UNHCR, 2016).

Other international organizations around the world for the Rohingya such as Burmese Rohingya Organization UK (BROUK), Burmese Muslim Association UK, Bradford Rohingya Community UK and Burma Campaign UK have joined forces and are calling on human rights advocates to apply political pressure and concrete steps to end discriminatory practices. against the Rohingya (Mabrur, 2015). ASEAN as an organization of countries in the Myanmar region also participates in solving these problems. ASEAN alienated Myanmar

and accepted the ILO's insistence on rejecting Myanmar's participation in ASEAN (Mohamad et al., 2010).

Until now the government of Myanmar has been elected through general elections several times. In November 2020, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD Party was again ahead in the second election, she was contesting under the current constitution. Myanmar's constitution allows the military to retain 25 percent of their seats in the lower and upper houses of the 500 votes contested. Although Aung San Suu Kyi has won the election in 2015, as a figure who is expected to build democratization in her country more quickly. However, the treatment of not recognizing the citizenship of the Rohingyas, which has made them tortured, intimidated and even displaced as a result of ethnic homogenization, has yet to show a bright spot.

If we adhere to the concept of heterogeneous nation building, multi-ethnic citizens should not be faced with ethnic homogenization, because the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and institutions in a nation is the basic capital of development power. The greater the availability of capital for the development of a nation, it is hoped that there will be more resources that can prosper its people and the greater the role and contribution that ethnic groups can make to their nation and in creating a humanist world. The series of events above led the author to ask research questions.

The question that the author asks in this research article is "

"Why does the regime in power in Myanmar insist on not recognizing the citizenship status of the Rohingya? Why do regional and international organizations respond to discrimination against the Rohingya? What ideas are offered so that ethnicity can be used for nation building?"

## **METHODS**

This type of research is a literature study. The author uses qualitative research methods, descriptive-analytical. Bogdan and Taylor in (Moleong, 2007) define qualitative research as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words both written and oral. Data in qualitative research is more in the form of words, pictures or objects, and not numbers. The groups or objects studied in qualitative research are usually small and are not determined randomly. The research

objects discussed include the government or regime currently holding and controlling the reins of government in Myanmar, regional and international organizations: ASEAN, EU, UNHCR.

Information or data that has been collected from books, journals and other documents carried out through data collection methods, then analyzed interpretively, subjectively, impressionistically, or even diagnostically (Umar, 2015). Descriptive-analytical is an attempt to describe the results of the data obtained, both orally and in writing for later analysis as a research conclusion (Kartini, 1996).

To achieve an objective analysis, the researcher held Focus Group Discussions and seminars in small groups with research colleagues who have expertise in international relations, political science as well as with those who have expertise in the disciplines of economics and development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Recognition of citizenship to the Rohingyas interferes with the sustainability of power in Myanmar as well as degrades political power in the military, therefore granting status to the Rohingya is not easy, it can take a long way or take a long time.

Regional and international organizations are very aware of the importance of Myanmar's nation-building that including all components of the nation to uphold democracy, and prevent state failure in the Southeast Asian region.

It is very important to do international law enforcement for strengthening and upholding democratic values, civil culture, human rights which sometimes clash with traditional sovereignty rights.

Shared identity is needed to bring together opposing groups as capital in building the future of a new generation in a country facing ethnic conflict.

It may take a "New Ideology" as a rope that can bind tightly and bind all ethnic groups that have ever been separated to meet and look to the future of the nation. The joint pledge is very necessary so that the children of the nation across generations can meet the development of their country safely, comfortably, and without conflict from one ethnicity to another.

Now there is a dialectic between development and humanity, where there are times when development that does not ignore the interests of humanity or ethnicity in a nation, will certainly lead to sustainable development conflicts. At different

times, the long-standing development conflict between ethnic groups can also be eroded away by promoting human values, namely providing participation which leads to a fair distribution of results to all humans in the region.

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