

The background of the entire page is a photograph of five hands reaching upwards towards the center. Each hand is adorned with intricate henna designs in orange and red. The hands are from different individuals, as evidenced by the variety of wristwatches and bangles. A semi-transparent red banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text.

Exploring State Values and Interests in Pursuit of International Justice in Asia: BANGLADESH



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About the Exploring State Values and Interests in Pursuit of International Justice in Asia Report Series

At time of writing, it has been more than 7 years since the so-called 'clearance operations' conducted against the Rohingya people of Myanmar. Since 2017, the situation in Myanmar has deteriorated further, marked by the military coup in 2021, widespread human rights violations, and escalating armed conflict across the country. Impunity, it appears, begets instability and further impunity.

Legal accountability¹ is one part of addressing the permissiveness that enables ongoing violations.

The situation in Myanmar is representative of an 'accountability gap' for international crimes.² Despite ongoing proceedings in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, accountability for non-State actors for harms committed in Myanmar are limited. Universal criminal jurisdiction matters³ assist in bridging this gap, but proceedings in, for example, Argentina are geographically and culturally distant.⁴

In an Asia Justice Coalition (AJC) closed-door expert convening on universal jurisdiction in Asia, participants discussed why there are not more opportunities to pursue international justice matters in Asian domestic courts. It was acknowledged that Asia has the lowest regional uptake of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and few States have incorporated international crimes into their domestic criminal codes. However, discussing why the legal avenues that do exist are not used more often, participants discussed the issue of absent political will.

Participants stated that, particularly throughout Asia, the principles of 'sovereignty and non-interference act as practical and manufactured hurdles to bringing' crimes committed in other States' jurisdictions in domestic courts. Participants also pointed out that the geographical distance of international justice mechanisms from Asia 'lends itself to States making stronger rhetorical arguments regarding violations of sovereignty and non-interference [when] the mechanisms were created not "by the region, for the region"'.

To understand political will, participants recommended considering States' 'values' and 'interests'. The two concepts are interconnected. 'Values' reflect decision-makers' understanding of a shared identity and appeal to preferences such as 'consultation and cooperation' and 'adherence to the rule of law'. 'Interests', on the other hand, may relate to a State's diplomacy, security concerns, or economic opportunities.

This project examines the concept of political will through the lens of values and interests in three States-Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. While each case study addresses distinct political dynamics, all are anchored in policy responses related to crimes experienced by the Rohingya.

To inform the project, AJC and the Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University (CPJ) held two, two-hour closed-door discussions in February 2023 with humanitarians, academics, and lawyers from across ASEAN Regional Forum members and South Asia whose work addresses the protracted refugee situation in Bangladesh and crisis in Myanmar or related issues. Among other questions, participants were asked whether they could identify particular State 'interests' in or 'values' related to preventing or addressing impunity concerning Myanmar and where these ranked in domestic priorities. These discussions resulted in a scoping paper, upon which this report series builds. The research team is indebted to those who shared their thoughts and expertise.

The three resulting reports provide differing perspectives and approaches to understanding political will in relation to accountability for the Rohingya crisis. The Bangladesh report explores how accountability is framed in relation to the country's primary policy objective: repatriation of the Rohingya. The Indonesia report uses an analysis based on the Narrative Policy Framework to examine how the Indonesian government's narrative on the Rohingya crisis shifted from an initial focus on international and regional cooperation for restoring stability and humanitarian aid (2017, 2021) to prioritising national security interests (2022, 2023). The Malaysia report takes a comparative approach, examining the country's significant engagement with the International Court of Justice in relation to crimes committed in Palestine, and assessing whether-and how-this political will might extend to accountability for crimes against the Rohingya.

Across the case studies, we identify opportunities for advocacy by reframing the pursuit of international accountability not only as a matter of values, but also as one aligned with national interests. This framing could open greater political space to promote all available accountability mechanisms-including the exercise of universal jurisdiction where available-as both a principled and pragmatic policy objective.

Papers produced within this project should not be taken to reflect the views or positions of all AJC members.

¹ Although 'justice' and 'accountability' are interlinked concepts addressing impunity, these reports adopt a distinction identified in the Asia Justice Coalition's (AJC) Women in International Justice and Accountability consultations. For this project, 'justice' is broader than 'accountability'-it is systemic, structural, holistic, and expansive. What constitutes achieving 'justice' is specific to the lived experience, preferences, and needs of affected individuals and communities. In contrast, 'accountability' is narrower-pursuing 'accountability' is about holding a specific individual or group responsible, including through formal legal processes. Making this distinction recognises that 'accountability' is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for 'justice'. For more about AJC and its resources, please visit: www.asiajusticecoalition.org.

² 'International crimes', here, includes the core offences found in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as 'torture' defined by the United Nations Convention against Torture.

³ 'Universal criminal jurisdiction' refers to the capacity and competence of a State's domestic courts to prosecute foreigners committing crimes against other foreigners and committed outside of the State. See also AJC's primer on Domestic Justice for International Crimes.https://www.asiajusticecoalition.org/_files/ugd/811bc6_9d465765ba8848b1a980c56b9ebf50c2.pdf.

⁴ See, e.g., Global Justice Center and Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK), 'Update: The Universal Jurisdiction Case Against Myanmar Officials' (February 2025) https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ArgentinaMyanmarUJ_QA_UPDATE.pdf (accessed 1 April 2025).

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Introduction

Bangladesh has borne the consequences of Myanmar's forced displacement of Rohingya people since 1978. In waves of displacement, Bangladesh's primary policy response has been to seek the Rohingya's return to Myanmar. This remains the case in response to the 2017 'clearance operations' and continued instability within Myanmar.

In this time, Bangladesh has consistently emphasised repatriation as the only solution from its perspective. However, repatriation in earlier waves was not sustained and Myanmar's continued persecution of the Rohingya is recognised as a hurdle to sustainable repatriation.

This study considers whether and how questions of using legal mechanisms to address these crimes (hereafter, policy measures promoting 'accountability') fit within the policy priorities and government rhetoric of Bangladesh. Dividing potential incentives into categories inspired by this project's scoping work, the study examines public statements made by Government of Bangladesh (GoB) actors to identify Bangladesh's 'interests' and 'values' regarding repatriation policies. Within 'interests', the study considers repatriation in light of language emphasising burden-sharing, security challenges, the economic cost of hosting the Rohingya, and the environmental impact of the crisis. Within 'values', the study considers repatriation in light of language emphasising the experience of Bangladeshis in similar humanitarian crises.

The study finds that the GoB—likely based on lessons from previous waves of displacement—acknowledged early in the crisis the important role that accountability would play in establishing the conditions for a sustainable return of the Rohingya to Myanmar. However, to date, the dominant theme in the statements is an emphasis on burden-sharing, or the collective distribution of responsibility—whether financial, logistical, or political—among States, international organisations, and other stakeholders. Burden-sharing also plays into how Bangladesh speaks of 'accountability'—calls for accountability are for measures by the 'international community'. This suggests an assumption that 'accountability' largely occurs because of collaboration (for example, among the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) and in international institutions (for example, in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)). This may also explain—in part—why the GoB has not seen fit to utilise its own domestic courts to seek accountability.

The study's findings suggest that advocacy for the use of accountability mechanisms beyond the ICJ—such as regional diplomatic efforts, economic sanctions, or targeted legal action against Myanmar's leadership—needs to also promote the sharing of responsibility for, and cost of, such efforts equitably.

Availability of the International Crimes Tribunal?

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), Bangladesh, is a domestic judicial mechanism established under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 (ICTA 1973). The ICTA 1973 was originally drafted for the purposes of trying Pakistani prisoners of war who committed international crimes against the Bengali populace during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971. However, for the greater part of four decades, an endemic culture of impunity deprived the surviving victims of justice. As the crimes of 1971 remained beyond the *ratione temporis* of the ICC, the then Bangladesh Government established the first International Crimes Tribunal in 2010 under the ICTA 1973 for the purposes of detaining, prosecuting and punishing 'persons responsible for committing genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law' in 1971.⁵

⁵ For more on the relevance of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal to this discussion, see: M Sanjeeb Hossain, 'The Search for Justice in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Legality and Legitimacy of the International Crimes Tribunals of Bangladesh through the prism of the principle of complementarity' (PhD Thesis, Warwick University, 2017) http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/103875/1/WRAP_Theses_Hossain_2017.pdf, accessed 22 March 2025.

Context

Sharing land, river, and maritime boundaries, Myanmar was one of the first States to recognise Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and formalised diplomatic ties in 1972. Bangladesh's Bengali-speaking, Muslim-majority culture contrasts with Myanmar's Burmese-speaking, Buddhist—majority society—a religious divide that has influenced inter-community relations.⁶ Nevertheless, the neighbours maintained amiable relations for approximately 40 years. However, at the time of writing, bilateral relations are strained—primarily due to the Rohingya crisis.⁷

The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority predominantly living in Myanmar's Rakhine, formerly Arakan, state. Myanmar's government labels them as 'illegal Bengali immigrants', a claim formalised by the 1982 Citizenship Act, which rendered the Rohingya stateless by recognising only specific ethnic groups as citizens.⁸ As a result, they faced systemic discrimination including denial of citizenship documents, education, employment, and freedom of movement, and even the right to marry freely, and were vulnerable to arbitrary detention, forced labour, discriminatory taxation and confiscation of property.

Rakhine, in which the majority of Rohingya live, is also Myanmar's least developed region. Widespread poverty, along with poor infrastructure and lack of employment opportunities, have intensified cleavages between the Buddhists and the Muslim Rohingyas in the state, exacerbated by their religious differences. The Myanmar government launched two major operations—Naga Min (King Dragon) in 1978 and Pyi Thar Ya in 1991—to oust so-called 'illegal immigrants', especially Rohingyas, from the country.⁹ In each case, significant numbers of Rohingya migrated to Bangladesh to avoid communal violence or abuse by security forces in Myanmar. This caused mass migration to Bangladesh, where the Rohingya found refuge in Cox's Bazar district.

Over time, forced displacement has continued. Bangladesh experienced the largest Rohingya refugee influx in 2017, with 700,000 fleeing violence and persecution by Myanmar's military following a crackdown involving widespread killings, rape, and arson.¹⁰

As of 31 January 2025, the data provided by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and the GoB, the current number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is 969,002 living in Cox's Bazar and 36,673 in Bhasan Char.¹¹

⁶ Sreeparna Banerjee, 'The Rohingya Crisis and its Impact on Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations' (Observer Research Foundation, (10 May 2023) www.orfonline.org/research/the-rohingya-crisis-and-its-impact-on-bangladesh-myanmar-relations).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, 'The Rohingya Crisis' (Council on Foreign Relations, 23 January 2020) www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis.

¹¹ UNHCR, 'Country - Bangladesh' (UNHCR) <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd> accessed 13 March 2025.

History of ‘Repatriation’ as a Policy Response

Before the 2017 influx, Bangladesh pursued a policy of repatriation regarding the Rohingya twice before.

Repatriation in 1978-1979

The first refugee crisis in Bangladesh—bearing similarities to today—occurred in 1978, just seven years after Bangladesh’s independence. An estimated 200,000 refugees from Arakan, Burma (now Rakhine State, Myanmar) took shelter in southeastern Bangladesh because of military operations by the Burmese army. The influx placed great strain on Bangladesh, leading to diplomatic tensions that nearly escalated into war. After bilateral negotiations and international appeals for assistance, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation agreement on 9 July 1978.¹² The agreement facilitated the return of Rohingyas, with Myanmar recognising them as citizens, though it did not include provisions for voluntary repatriation.¹³ By late 1978, thousands of Rohingyas had returned to Myanmar.¹⁴

However, soon after the repatriation, Myanmar implemented a discriminatory citizenship law targeting the Rohingya. The 1982 Citizenship Act classified them as ‘foreign citizens’ (Bengali) and introduced a tiered system of citizenship.¹⁵ This marked the beginning of systematic efforts by Burma to marginalise and expel the Rohingyas from their homeland.

Repatriation in 1992

In 1991 and 1992, another major Rohingya refugee crisis unfolded as approximately 250,000 Rohingya ‘fled forced [labour], rape and religious persecution at the hands of the Burmese army’.¹⁶ Diplomatic efforts led to a bilateral agreement between the two nations in April 1992, but key differences from the 1978 agreement complicated matters. Chief among them, Myanmar introduced conditions requiring returnees to prove their residency and barred forced repatriation; in doing so, Myanmar referenced the 1982 Citizenship Law¹⁷ which excluded most Rohingyas from citizenship. By permitting the return of only documented ‘legitimate citizens’, the agreement set the stage for the issues that continue to impact repatriation efforts today.

Bangladesh initially managed relief efforts independently but sought international assistance as refugee numbers rose.¹⁸ The UNHCR facilitated relief but withdrew from the repatriation program in December 1992 in the face of allegations of coercive or forced return of Rohingya by the Bangladesh authorities.¹⁹ In response, Bangladesh halted unilateral repatriation and negotiated a new Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR in 1993, ensuring protections for refugees and voluntary repatriation through private interviews.²⁰ However, coercion reportedly persisted, with refugees being pressured to ‘volunteer’ for return.²¹

¹² Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma and People’s Republic of Bangladesh, ‘1978 Repatriation Agreement’ (Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 August 2014) <https://dataspace.princeton.edu/handle/88435/dsp01th83kz538>.

¹³ Probir Kumar Sarker, ‘Rohingya exodus in 1978: A history of systematic eviction’ Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 31 August 2021) www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/256900/op-ed-rohingya-exodus-in-1978-a-history-of; Amir Khasru, ‘Rohingya Repatriation: Is Bangladesh Falling for Myanmar’s Ploy?’ The Daily Star (Dhaka, 28 October 2017) www.thedailystar.net/opinion/perspective/rohingya-repatriation-1482733.

¹⁴ See British Embassy Rangoon, ‘Refugees, Burmese Style Summary’ (British Embassy Rangoon, 5 July 1979) www.networkmyanmar.org/ESW/Files/FCO15-2468-4.pdf.

¹⁵ Only people who had lived in Rakhine for at least five generations received full citizenship. The year 1823 was set as the benchmark, which favoured the Rakhine Buddhists. See: Amir Khasru, ‘Rohingya Repatriation: Is Bangladesh Falling for Myanmar’s Ploy?’ The Daily Star (Dhaka, 28 October 2017) www.thedailystar.net/opinion/perspective/rohingya-repatriation-1482733.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, ‘Historical Background’ (Human Rights Watch) www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm.

¹⁷ BROUK, ‘Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law and Rohingya’ (BROUK, 2014) <https://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/Myanmar%E2%80%99s-1982-Citizenship-Law-and-Rohingya.pdf>.

¹⁸ Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, ‘Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees’ (Online Burma/Myanmar Library) www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs/Abrar-repatriation.htm#_ftn1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Repatriation from 2017-2024

The Bangladesh government initially closed its borders in 2017 to prevent further Rohingya entry.²² Then, on 11 September 2017 Parliament passed a resolution urging international pressure on Myanmar to enable the Rohingya's safe return,²³ with the then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina criticising Myanmar for stripping the Rohingya of their rights.²⁴

Early Responses

The former government did not directly or publicly hold Myanmar's former State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi accountable for the crisis. However, Sheikh Hasina was critical of Suu Kyi and her government's failure to acknowledge the military's actions and for not taking steps to protect the rights of the Rohingya. In August 2017, she urged Aung San Suu Kyi and the Myanmar government to take the refugees back because they are '[Myanmar's] citizens' and-although Bangladesh would provide temporary relief because 'they are human...we are human'-their longer-term protection was Myanmar's responsibility.²⁵ Sheikh Hasina also stated that Myanmar's government was actively preventing Rohingya from crossing the border.²⁶

Notably, less than a month after the 'Clearance Operations' the then Bangladeshi Foreign Minister labelled the violence 'a genocide', with the Chair of the National Commission for Human Rights stating that the body was 'thinking about pressing for a trial against Myanmar, and against the Myanmar army at an international tribunal'.²⁷

On 23 November 2017, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed an agreement initially setting a 23 January 2018 deadline for the Rohingya's repatriation to Myanmar and establishing cooperation in a Joint Working Group on the matter.²⁸ The 'Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State' notes in its 'Guiding Principles' some of the conditions for a sustainable return advocated by Bangladesh, but notably not all; importantly,²⁹ the Arrangement indicates that 'Myanmar [] agreed to take necessary measures to halt the outflow of Myanmar residents' and notes that returnees' 'access to basic services and livelihood will be further promoted', but no reference to addressing returnees' lack of citizenship is included and freedom of movement within Rakhine 'will be allowed *in conformity with existing laws and regulations*' (emphasis added).³⁰ This initial process stalled, with Bangladesh authorities stating this was due to Myanmar's reluctance.³¹

²² BBC, 'Myanmar Rakhine: Thousands flee to Bangladesh border' (BBC, 27 August 2017) www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41067747.

²³ Star Online Report, 'Parliament resolve to push Myanmar to take back Rohingya refugees' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 11 September 2017) www.thedailystar.net/politics/bangladesh-rohingya-refugee-crisis-parliament-adopt-resolution-united-nations-international-community-push-myanmar-1460767.

²⁴ Syed Zainul Abedin Eiffel, 'Parliament passes resolution urging UN to mount pressure on Myanmar' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 11 September 2017) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/125405/parliament-passes-resolution-urging-un-to-mount.

²⁵ BBC News, 'Myanmar should take back their citizens' (BBC News, 12 September 2017) www.youtube.com/watch?v=29sDINzPMwM.

²⁶ Euan McKirdy, 'Bangladeshi Prime Minister Condemns Myanmar over Rohingya Treatment' (CNN, 22 September 2017) <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/21/asia/bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-un-rohingya/index.html>.

²⁷ 'Bangladesh FM: Violence against Rohingya "Is Genocide"' (Al Jazeera, 11 September 2017) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/9/11/bangladesh-fm-violence-against-rohingya-is-genocide>.

²⁸ M Delwar Hossain (ed), 'Foreign Office Briefing Notes' (External Publicity Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mofa.portal.gov.bd/publications/a424e427_d304_4539_9655_3415529899ef/Foreign%20Office%20Briefing%20Notes%20November%20-%202017.pdf.

²⁹ 'Arrangement on return of displaced persons from Rakhine State between the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar' (23 November 2017) https://myanmar.iiss.org/files/rohingya/2017.11.23%20-%20Arrangement%20on%20Return%20of%20Displaced%20Persons%20from%20Rakhine%20State_Clean.pdf.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ BBC, 'Rohingya crisis: Bangladesh and Myanmar agree repatriation timeframe' (BBC, 16 January 2018) www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42699602.

A second deadline was set for 15 November 2018,³² but failed after protests from Rohingya refugees,³³ human rights groups,³⁴ and the UN³⁵—all fearing that repatriation was forced.

Bangladesh then scheduled 22 August 2019 as a third deadline to begin repatriation, with the GoB emphasising that any returns would be 'voluntary'.³⁶ However, no refugees agreed to return by the deadline, citing continued unsafe conditions in Myanmar.³⁷

By 2023, Bangladesh set the most recent repatriation deadline of 31 December 2023 under a 'pilot' repatriation process.³⁸ A delegation of 20 Rohingya refugees visited Myanmar's 'model villages' in May but rejected them as restrictive internally displaced person camps.³⁹

Concerns regarding Conditions after Repatriation

Notably, a booklet distributed during the visit lacked discussion of several key protections. It did not recognise the Rohingya as Myanmar nationals—'reflect[ing] the apartheid mindset' of the junta—and lacked details on key provisions like medicines and nutrition.⁴⁰ Farming opportunities were unclear, insufficient financial support was offered, and the process for obtaining National Verification Cards seemed restrictive.⁴¹ While the booklet mentioned training and education, it did not address gaps in schooling or access to markets.⁴² The booklet also failed to address the issue of justice.⁴³

Bangladesh has consistently emphasised repatriation as the only solution, viewing the crisis as resolvable only from Myanmar's side. The GoB has repeatedly stressed that Myanmar must take significant steps to establish conditions for a safe and sustainable return, including ensuring security, citizenship rights, and basic freedoms for the Rohingya. However, Myanmar's lack of progress on these fronts creates a considerable challenge for Bangladesh, as it remains host to a large refugee population with no clear pathway to repatriation.

³² Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Halt Rohingya Repatriation Plan' (Human Rights Watch, 15 November 2018) www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/15/bangladesh-halt-rohingya-repatriation-plan.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 'Rohingya in Bangladesh will not be forced back to Myanmar' (Al Jazeera, 15 November 2018) www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/15/rohingya-in-bangladesh-will-not-be-forced-back-to-myanmar.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Inputs for Media on Diplomatic Briefing by HFM on Rohingya Repatriation State Guest House Padma, 29 August 2019' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 August 2019) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/558b1cfe-aa6c-4a6e-af08-b0415d7e0e8f#:~:text=Bangladesh%20agreed%20to%20facilitate%20the,the%20displaced%20people%20to%20return..

³⁷ Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Shaikh Azizur Rahman, 'Rohingya refugees turn down second Myanmar repatriation effort' The Guardian (London, 22 August 2019) www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/22/rohingya-refugees-turn-down-second-myanmar-repatriation-effort.

³⁸ See: Raheed Ejaz, 'Rohingya repatriation expected to start from December' Prothom Alo English (Dhaka, 24 August 2023) <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/n6ygkky5xy>; 'Myanmar seeking to repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh' (Al Jazeera, 31 October 2023) www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/31/myanmar-176.

³⁹ 'Rohingya delegation visits Myanmar amid latest repatriation plans' (Al Jazeera, 5 May 2023) www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/5/rohingya-delegation-visits-myanmar-amid-latest-repatriation-plans; TBS Report, 'Rohingya delegation's Myanmar visit: Original land, villages sought in first homecoming in 6yrs' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 5 May 2023) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/bangladesh-delegation-rakhine-state-inspect-situation-prior-rohingya-repatriation.

⁴⁰ Shahariar Sadat, Azizul Haque and Arafat Reza, 'Rohingya Repatriation: The booklet diplomacy' (RLI Blog on Refugee Law and Forced Migration, 9 June 2023) <https://rli.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2023/06/09/rohingya-repatriation-the-booklet-diplomacy/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Methodology

As outlined in this project's scoping paper, we define 'State values' as factors that pertain to the identity of a State, while 'State interests' are primarily concerned with practical considerations that influence decision-making. Admittedly, the distinction between the two concepts can be ambiguous, as State 'values' and State 'interests' often intersect and interact depending on how they are characterised. Nonetheless, these concepts provide a useful framework for categorising and differentiating key factors that underpin decision-making in a Bangladeshi context.

This study examines 110 public statements on Rohingya repatriation and policy measures by the Bangladesh government between 2017 and 2024, made primarily by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner and the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The search was conducted using general search terms such as 'Rohingya repatriation', 'policy measures by the Bangladesh government', and statements by 'Bangladeshi government officials on repatriation', across multiple platforms, including official Bangladesh government websites, newspapers, news television channels, and other credible sources. Filters were applied to refine results based on publication date, relevance, and source credibility.

Recognising the change of government in 2024, statements by the current head of the Interim Government (Chief Adviser) and the Foreign Adviser of Bangladesh are also considered to confirm the study's findings.

These public statements have been coded and categorised in the following manner according to 'interests' or 'values' suggested by participants in the project's scoping discussions:

The 'interest' of '**burden-sharing**' appears if the statement discusses:

- 'Collective responsibility' of nations to support conditions for repatriation;
- The role of the United Nations, ASEAN, or other regional and international organisations in supporting conditions for repatriation; and/or
- The importance of other States in working with Bangladesh or pressuring Myanmar for repatriation.

The 'value' of '**humanitarian relief**' relates to recognising and acting on shared experiences. It appears if the statement discusses hosting or supporting repatriation for the Rohingya for reasons of:

- Basic need, ability to be a 'first responder'; and/or
- In recognition of Bangladesh's experiences related to 1971.

The 'interest' of '**security**' appears if the statement discusses, in relation to the need for repatriation:

- 'Threats' to Bangladesh, regional, or global security;
- 'Risk of terrorism'; and/or
- Risk of organised crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking.

'The 'interest' in 'protecting the **economy**' appears if the statement discusses, in relation to the need for repatriation:

- The Rohingya's prolonged stay's impact on Bangladesh's economic resources; and/or
- The need for greater financial aid in hosting the Rohingya.

Additional to the scoping discussions, an 'interest' in the '**environment**' was added because it was raised multiple times. This appears if the statement discusses, in relation to the need for repatriation,

environmental degradation because of the Rohingya's prolonged stay.

Finally, the statements were examined for references to the need for legal '**accountability**' for the purpose of addressing the root causes of displacement and ensuring sustainable repatriation. '**Accountability**' appears if the statement discusses, in relation to safe and sustainable repatriation:

- Holding Myanmar or specific individuals 'accountable' for crimes against the Rohingya;
- Seeking 'justice' for the Rohingya;
- The role of the ICJ or the International Criminal Court (ICC) in supporting accountability for crimes against the Rohingya; and/or
- The need to address/prevent 'impunity'.

Findings & Discussion

By far, the value of 'burden-sharing' appears the most—74 statements out of 110; 'security interests' is thesecond (43 statements), 'economic interests' (11 statements), 'environmental interests' (11 statements), and 'humanitarian values' (10 statements). References to the need for 'accountability' as related to sustainable repatriation appeared in 24 statements.

Burden-Sharing

The most common value or interest appearing in the statements examined was burden-sharing. These statements frequently advocate for efforts to create agreement and collaboration between different stakeholders (such as governments, international organisations, and civil society groups) to address the crisis.

They emphasise that no single country or organisation should shoulder the full responsibility of the situation. Such statements underscore a 'collective responsibility'⁴⁴ to alleviate the suffering of the Rohingya people, ranging from collective humanitarian aid to diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, as well as participation in international accountability measures.

Burden-Sharing & Relevant Decision-Makers

Out of 74 statements referencing burden-sharing, 70 of these statements were made by either representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the former Prime Minister. This is likely because both the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister play central roles in trade negotiations, fundraising efforts, and diplomatic relations. Their positions inherently require them to seek international cooperation and collaboration to advance national interests, making burden-sharing a key part of their agenda on the global stage.

⁴⁴ For example, see the following 4 statements in which the official or government body refers to 'the international community's 'collective responsibility' for resolving the crisis and supporting the Rohingya: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Draft Speech for kind use of the Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the launching of the report Childhood Interrupted: Children's Voice from the Rohingya Camps in Cox's Bazar' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 February 2018) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/003656c9-90e0-40a0-b130-71602aaa2dd8; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Joint Response Plan- 2022 launched to provide continued humanitarian support by the International community to the forcibly displaced Rohingya' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 March 2022) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/b148922d-7784-4d8f-ae66-7a71ffe1d634; Tribune Report, 'MoFA: Further delay in Rohingya repatriation may put entire region at risk' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 August 2023) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/323471/mofa-further-delay-in-rohingya-repatriation-may.

The link between repatriation and burden-sharing is clear: Bangladesh has borne the brunt of the crisis providing humanitarian assistance at first instance. Recognising the crisis' 'root causes' are internal to Myanmar⁴⁵ and given Myanmar's 'reluctance' or 'failure' to address such causes,⁴⁶ the statements argue that sustainable repatriation would only be possible with greater assistance and pressure by the international community.

The statements indicate that Bangladesh has explicitly called for burden-sharing across multiple levels of cooperation:

- Bilaterally, including but not limited to⁴⁷ engagement with China,⁴⁸ Indi,⁴⁹ France,⁵⁰ Germany,⁵¹

⁴⁵ For example, at the 74th UN General Assembly in 2019, then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated, 'We are bearing the burden of a crisis which is Myanmar's own making ... It's an issue solely between Myanmar and its own people, the Rohingyas. They themselves have to resolve it.' See: BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475. This message was also repeated in 2020, 2021, and 2022; see the following, respectively: UN Affairs, 'Bangladesh Urges Greater International Action on Rohingya Status' (ReliefWeb, 26 September 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-urges-greater-international-action-rohingya-status>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by H. E. Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the General Debate of the 76th UNGA 24 September 2021' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 September 2021) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/e58656ae-8c2f-4b35-8abf-77849fed5eeb>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3.

⁴⁶ See: UNB, 'Myanmar Misleads Int'l Community with Fabricated Info: Bangladesh' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 30 October 2019) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/myanmar-misleads-intl-community-fabricated-info-bangladesh; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Myanmar must stop unjustifiable campaign against Bangladesh on Rohingya Repatriation' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 November 2019) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/35672d18-eb9c-43dd-bc4a-bbb1c6fb084a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Rohingya crisis requires a political solution, which lies with Myanmar—Abassador Rabab Fatima' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 September 2020) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/656bf058-99b4-4e02-8103-f05db765f7fe.

⁴⁷ See Nabban T Haque, 'PM Hasina: UNGA discussion will help continue international pressure for Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 4 October 2021)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/260506/pm-hasina-unga-discussion-will-help-continue.

⁴⁸ Tribune Desk, 'JWG meeting Tuesday, efforts to begin Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 26 October 2018)

www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/159328/jwg-meeting-tuesday-efforts-to-begin-rohingya; Mukhtadir Rashid, 'Myanmar Doesn't Want to Repatriate Rohingya, Bangladeshi PM Says' (The Irrawaddy, 10 June 2019)

www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-doesnt-want-repatriate-rohingya-bangladeshi-pm-says.html; UNB, 'Rohingya Repatriation: Bangladesh, China, Myanmar to Evaluate Progress' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 24 September 2019)

www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/bangladesh-china-myanmar-jointly-evaluate-progress-over-rohingya-repatriation-1804615; Nan Lwin, 'Myanmar, Bangladesh, China to Form Joint Working Group on Rohingya Repatriation' (The Irrawaddy, 26 September 2019)

www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-bangladesh-china-to-form-joint-working-group-on-rohingya-repatriation.html; Rumi Kawser, 'Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh, Myanmar, China joint mechanism begins work' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 28 October 2019)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/191699/rohingya-repatriation-bangladesh-myanmar-china; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022)

www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057; Tribune Desk, 'Trilateral process finding suitable time to start Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 3 August 2023) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/321562/trilateral-process-finding-suitable-time-to; UNB, 'Dhaka urges Beijing to aid in Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 4 June 2024)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/348392/rohingyas-dhaka-seeks-beijing%E2%80%99s-engagement-with; AKM Moinuddin, 'China-Bangladesh: The Key Points in the Joint Statement' (Dhaka Courier, 12 July 2024)

www.dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Reportage/China-Bangladesh-The-key-points-in-the-joint-statement/8310.

⁴⁹ PTI, 'Difficult to Move Ahead on Connectivity under BIMSTEC Unless Rohingya Issue Resolved: Bangladesh' The Indian Express (New Delhi, 31 May 2018)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/difficult-to-move-ahead-on-connectivity-under-bimstec-unless-rohingya-issue-resolved-bangladesh-5199214/>; Tribune Desk, 'JWG meeting Tuesday, efforts to begin Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 26 October 2018)

www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/159328/jwg-meeting-tuesday-efforts-to-begin-rohingya; Mukhtadir Rashid, 'Myanmar Doesn't Want to Repatriate Rohingya, Bangladeshi PM Says' (The Irrawaddy, 10 June 2019)

www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-doesnt-want-repatriate-rohingya-bangladeshi-pm-says.html; Rumi Kawser, 'Hasina, Modi for expediting efforts for sustainable Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 5 October 2019)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/189464/hasina-modi-for-expediting-efforts-for; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798.

⁵⁰ ELYSEE, 'Joint Statement Bangladesh – France: Partnership for Peace, Prosperity and People' (ELYSEE, 11 September 2023) www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2023/09/11/joint-statement-bangladesh-france-partnership-for-peace-prosperity-and-people.

⁵¹ UNB, 'Bangladesh, Germany for Sustainable Rohingya Repatriation' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 5 June 2023) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/bangladesh-germany-sustainable-rohingya-repatriation-3338516.

Japan,⁵² Saudi Arabia,⁵³ Sri Lanka,⁵⁴ the United Arab Emirates,⁵⁵ the United Kingdom,⁵⁶ and the United States,⁵⁷

- Regionally, including appealing to the leadership of ASEAN;⁵⁸ and
- Internationally, including active engagement in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)⁵⁹ and at the United Nations and with its agencies.⁶⁰

⁵² Mukhtadir Rashid, 'Myanmar Doesn't Want to Repatriate Rohingya, Bangladeshi PM Says' (The Irrawaddy, 10 June 2019) www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-doesnt-want-repatriate-rohingya-bangladeshi-pm-says.html; BSS, 'Dhaka, Tokyo for safe, sustainable Rohingya repatriation for regional peace' (BSS News, 27 April 2023) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/122676; BSS, 'PM Urges Int'l Community for More Support for Rohingya Refugees' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 28 April 2023) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-urges-intl-community-more-support-rohingya-refugees-623422.

⁵³ Shehab Sumon, 'Kingdom Supports Efforts to Safely Repatriate Rohingya from Bangladesh: Saudi Envoy' Arab News (Dhaka, 5 October 2023) www.arabnews.com/node/2385866/world.

⁵⁴ BSS, 'PM Hasina seeks Sri Lanka's support for safe repatriation of Rohingyas' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 November 2022) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/299026/pm-hasina-seeks-sri-lanka-s-support-for-safe.

⁵⁵ Jago News Desk, 'Rohingyas Must Go Back: PM' (Jagonews24.com, 20 April 2019) www.jagonews24.com/en/national/news/44711.

⁵⁶ BSS, 'PM stresses global efforts for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 28 January 2024) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/170415; UNB, 'PM Seeks UK Help over Rohingya Repatriation' Daily Sun (Dhaka, 12 May 2024) www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/747276.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Meeting held between Bangladesh Foreign Minister and US Secretary of State: Rohingya repatriation stressed' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 April 2019) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/5c9430d6-aed7-43b1-8b62-8cc07709c512.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Rohingya crisis requires a political solution, which lies with Myanmar –Ambassador Rabab Fatima' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 September 2020) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/656bf058-99b4-4e02-8103-f05db765f7fe; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by H. E. Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the General Debate of the 76th UNGA 24 September 2021' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 September 2021) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/e58656ae-8c2f-4b35-8abf-77849fed5eeb>; Nabban T Haque, 'PM Hasina: UNGA discussion will help continue international pressure for Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 4 October 2021) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/260506/pm-hasina-unga-discussion-will-help-continue; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Foreign Minister Dr A K Abdul Momen called for coordinated actions for resolution of Rohingya Crisis' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 February 2023) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/ce17ad4a-b96a-4acf-b63e-a047938842ab; BSS, 'Dhaka, Tokyo for safe, sustainable Rohingya repatriation for regional peace' (BSS News, 27 April 2023) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/122676; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'UN adopts Rohingya resolution by consensus' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 November 2023) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/1550ab59-e13a-41f6-8040-083e6ba7e1bb; UNB, 'Bangladesh wants Asean to do more to facilitate Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 12 January 2024) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/336568/bangladesh-wants-asean-to-do-more-to-facilitate.

⁵⁹ Senior Correspondent, 'Bangladesh demands Rohingya repatriation to Myanmar, crisis solution at OIC meeting' (Bdnews24.com, 19 January 2017) <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/bangladesh-demands-rohingya-repatriation-to-myanmar-crisis-solution-at-oic-meeting>; Dhaka Tribune, 'Bangladesh disburses \$500,000 to OIC for Gambia's case over Rohingya genocide' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 28 November 2020) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/231694/bangladesh-disburses-500-000-to-oic-for-gambia%E2%80%99s; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087.

⁶⁰ Agence France-Presse, 'Bangladesh Minister Speaks of Genocide in Myanmar's Rakhine' Hindustan Times (New Delhi, 10 September 2017) www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/bangladesh-minister-speaks-of-genocide-in-myanmar-s-rakhine/story-QC2AkM3CkNCEalIkWp5JyL.html; UN, 'Address by H. E. Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh' (UN, 21 September 2017) https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/72/bd_en.pdf?_gl=1*lopqh8*_ga*NjM2NTY1NDMyLjE3MDQ1MzMwODE.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTczOTkyMTMzOC40NS4wLjE3Mzk5MjEzZmZuMC4wLjA.*_ga_S5EKZKSB78*MTczOTkyMTMzOC4xNC4xLjE3Mzk5MjEzZmZuMTkuMC4w; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Release on PM makes 3 proposals for resolving Rohingya crisis' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 September 2018) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/16450e39-cff8-4ad8-a8a2-e25b5399aba7; BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; Rumi Kawser, 'Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh, Myanmar, China joint mechanism begins work' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 28 October 2019) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/191699/rohingya-repatriation-bangladesh-myanmar-china; UN News, 'Bangladesh Urges Greater International Action on Rohingya Status' (UN News, 26 September 2020) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073882>; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Nabban T Haque, 'PM Hasina: UNGA discussion will help continue international pressure for Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 4 October 2021) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/260506/pm-hasina-unga-discussion-will-help-continue; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Foreign Minister Calls for Proactive Engagement of International Community for Sustainable Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Rohingyas' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 May 2022)

Support for, and of, the OIC

Bangladesh is a member of the 57-nation OIC. The OIC formed a 'contact group' on the Rohingya in 2012.⁶¹

In 2018, Bangladesh convened a special meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers in Dhaka to discuss the Rohingya situation and promote collective support for international accountability. An Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against the Rohingya was formed at the Dhaka meeting.⁶²

In November 2020, it was reported that Bangladesh disbursed 500,000 USD along with funds from Saudi Arabia (300,000 USD), Malaysia, Nigeria, and Turkey (100,000 USD each) to pay for the legal fees of the lawyers representing The Gambia at the ICJ.⁶³

Notably, burden-sharing is intertwined with all other interests or values examined: 22 statements reference both security and burden-sharing; 10 statements reference both humanitarian values and burden-sharing. Furthermore, all statements referencing either economic interests or environmental interests also mention burden-sharing. This overlap highlights the pervasive role of burden-sharing as a guiding principle across multiple dimensions of crisis management.

Of the 74 statements referencing burden-sharing, 23 also called for accountability measures. Eleven of these explicitly refer to the need for the international community to pursue accountability through international mechanisms such as the ICJ or ICC.⁶⁴ The remaining seven statements refer to the need for

https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/a2511c08-7a23-4e28-be36-c6929a581ae5; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022)

https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057; Somoy National Desk, 'Myanmar not responding positively to Rohingya issue: PM' (Somoy News, 8 March 2023)

<https://en.somoynews.tv/news/2023-03-08/myanmar-not-responding-positively-to-rohingya-repatriation-pm>; BSS, 'Full text of PM Sheikh Hasina's speech at UNGA' (BSS News, 23 September 2023) www.bssnews.net/news/148842; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'UN adopts Rohingya resolution by consensus' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 November 2023)

https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/1550ab59-e13a-41f6-8040-083e6ba7e1bb.

⁶¹ OIC, 'Report of the OIC Contact Group on the Rohingya Muslim Minority' (OIC, 28 September 2012) www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=528&refID=46.

⁶² OIC, 'The Dhaka Declaration' (OIC, 5-6 May 2018) www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=1907&refID=1078; OIC, (OIC, 22 January 2019) www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=20506&t_ref=11671&lan=en.

⁶³ Rumi Kawser, 'OIC draws US\$ 1.2 million for Gambia to run Rohingya genocide case' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 6 December 2020) www.dhakatribune.com/world/232556/oic-draws-1.2m-for-gambia-to-run-rohingya.

⁶⁴ 'Bangladesh FM: Violence against Rohingya is Genocide' (Al Jazeera, 11 September 2017)

www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/9/11/bangladesh-fm-violence-against-rohingya-is-genocide; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Release on Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary) speaks in a Seminar on Rohingya issue' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 September 2018)

https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/95fc505f-8706-4a84-88a1-42d89046dda2; UNB, 'Myanmar Not out of ICC, ICJ Jurisdiction: Shahriar Alam' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 18 November 2019)

www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/myanmar-not-out-icc-icj-jurisdiction-shahriar-alam-1828765; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Myanmar must stop unjustifiable campaign against Bangladesh on Rohingya Repatriation' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 November 2019) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/35672d18-eb9c-43dd-bc4a-bbb1c6fb084a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Rohingya crisis requires a political solution, which lies with Myanmar – Ambassador Rabab Fatima' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 September 2020) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/656bf058-99b4-4e02-8103-f05db765f7fe; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020)

<https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; Dhaka Tribune, 'Bangladesh disburses \$500,000 to OIC for Gambia's case over Rohingya genocide' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 28 November 2020)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/231694/bangladesh-disburses-500-000-to-oic-for-gambia%E2%80%99s; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021)

www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Nabban T Haque, 'PM Hasina: UNGA discussion will help continue international pressure for Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 4 October 2021)

www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/260506/pm-hasina-unga-discussion-will-help-continue; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022)

https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

the international community to push for accountability more generally.⁶⁵ No statement examined refers to accountability using domestic mechanisms.

Security

The use of 'security' to justify repatriation appeared second most often, with a total of 43 statements. The themes within these statements include balancing the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees while safeguarding Bangladesh's border security, preventing radicalisation and terrorism within the camps, and ensuring domestic stability.

Security & Relevant Actors

Out of the 43 statements referencing security, 20 were directly attributed to the then-Minister of Home Affairs. This is logical because the Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for internal security and domestic policy, overseeing functions such as law enforcement, border management, disaster management, and internal administration.

The Ministry of Home Affairs also leads the National Committee on Coordination, Management, and Law and Order, which has been instrumental in the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis since early 2021. This 17-member committee was created for coordinating, managing, and maintaining 'law and order' regarding the Rohingyas with the Home Minister as its convener. The Committee is responsible for coordinating law and order in camps and repatriation, involving the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and National Security Intelligence.⁶⁶

These statements link the presence of the Rohingya to threats to Bangladesh's security. While the risk of radicalisation and terrorism is referenced throughout, the dominant focus is on the prevention of drug-smuggling (from 2017 to 2022) which then changes slightly to also include the prevention of arms smuggling and addressing Arakan Rohingya Solidarity Army (ARSA)/ Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) violence (from 2022 to 2024).

⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Release on PM makes 3 proposals for resolving Rohingya crisis' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 September 2018) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/16450e39-cff8-4ad8-a8a2-e25b5399aba7; Tribune Desk, 'JWG meeting Tuesday, efforts to begin Rohingya repatriation' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 26 October 2018) www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/159328/jwg-meeting-tuesday-efforts-to-begin-rohingya; BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; The Irrawaddy, 'Myanmar Objects to Bangladeshi Minister's Remarks Over Rohingya at NAM Meeting' (The Irrawaddy, 25 October 2019) www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-objects-bangladeshi-ministers-remarks-rohingya-nam-meeting.html; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'State Minister for Foreign Affairs emphasized on decisive global collective actions to ensure voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingyas' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 December 2019) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/603f909e-1129-4c17-a77c-4a71f068b63f; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by H. E. Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the General Debate of the 76th UNGA 24 September 2021' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 September 2021) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/e58656ae-8c2f-4b35-8abf-77849fed5eeb>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3.

⁶⁶ See: 'National Committee Formed to Coordinate Rohingya-Related Activities' (The Daily Star, 16 December 2020) <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/national-committee-formed-coordinate-rohingya-related-activities-2012517>.

⁶⁷ Star Online Report, 'Myanmar Working on Rohingya Repatriation: Suu Kyi' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 25 October 2017) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/myanmar-started-working-rohingya-repatriation-aung-san-suu-kyi-1481539; PTI, 'Difficult to Move Ahead on Connectivity under BIMSTEC Unless Rohingya Issue Resolved: Bangladesh' The Indian Express (New Delhi, 31 May 2018) <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/difficult-to-move-ahead-on-connectivity-under-bimstec-unless-rohingya-issue-resolved-bangladesh-5199214/>.

Examining all the statements appealing to security interests-and not solely those by the Home Ministry-there is a noticeable shift in the scope of the 'security threat' that continues to exist without repatriation. This is because statements from 2017 to 2018 appear to frame the security threat as limited to Myanmar and Bangladesh.⁶⁷ However, starting in 2019, the perceived threat expands to encompass the region or even the global community.⁶⁸ This occurs not only in the statements by the then-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs-an outward facing message consistent with their roles—but also the Home Minister. This framing aligns with calls for greater burden-sharing: if the security threat is global, other States also have a vested interest in supporting sustainable repatriation efforts.

Evolving Security Interests?

- In October 2017, the then-Home Minister references the need for repatriation to prevent terrorism and drug-smuggling into Bangladesh.⁶⁹
- In May 2019, the then-Home Minister justifies greater surveillance and security of camps in light of increased crime allegedly by the Rohingya.⁷⁰
- In January 2021, the then-Home Minister expresses frustration at a lack of repatriation and noting a need for further camp surveillance and patrols to address drug smuggling and smuggling-related violence.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Trainee, '16-point recommendations to ensure security in Rohingya camps' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 29 May 2019) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/178235/16-point-recommendations-to-ensure-security-in; BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Foreign Minister Calls for Proactive Engagement of International Community for Sustainable Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Rohingyas' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 May 2022) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/a2511c08-7a23-4e28-be36-c6929a581ae5; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; Kamal Uddin Ahmed, 'Hasina's Pitch for Solving the Rohingya Crisis' (The Diplomat, 11 October 2022) <https://thedi diplomat.com/2022/10/hasinas-pitch-for-solving-the-rohingya-crisis/>; BSS, 'PM Hasina seeks Sri Lanka's support for safe repatriation of Rohingyas' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 November 2022) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/299026/pm-hasina-seeks-sri-lanka-s-support-for-safe; Tribune Report, 'MoFA: Further delay in Rohingya repatriation may put entire region at risk' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 August 2023) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/323471/mofa-further-delay-in-rohingya-repatriation-may; BSS, 'Full text of PM Sheikh Hasina's speech at UNGA' (BSS News, 23 September 2023) www.bssnews.net/news/148842; Star Digital Report, 'Rohingya Camps Risk Turning into a Terrorist Hub: Home Minister' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 31 May 2024) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/rohingya-camps-risk-turning-terrorist-hub-home-minister-3623721; Staff Correspondent, 'Myanmar Armed Groups' Movement in Rohingya Camps: Home Minister' Prothom Alo English (Cox's Bazar, 1 June 2024) <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/rzktudyisk>.

⁶⁹ In this statement, former Bangladeshi Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan raised concerns with Myanmar leadership that, 'if those who entered Bangladesh are not quickly repatriated, they may get involved in terrorism activities' and drug smuggling into Bangladesh. See: Star Online Report, 'Myanmar Working on Rohingya Repatriation: Suu Kyi' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 25 October 2017) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/myanmar-started-working-rohingya-repatriation-aung-san-suu-kyi-1481539.

⁷⁰ In this statement, the former Bangladeshi Home Minister stated, 'In the last 21 months, many Rohingyas have become involved in murder, smuggling, rape and human trafficking. In the same period, 328 cases were lodged with 711 accused. Of these, there were 31 murders, 31 cases related to illegal weapons and 118 linked to drugs.' See: Trainee, '16-point recommendations to ensure security in Rohingya camps' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 29 May 2019) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/178235/16-point-recommendations-to-ensure-security-in. Moreover, on 25 August, three days after the failed repatriation attempt, around 200,000 Rohingya attended a rally inside the refugee settlement to commemorate 'Rohingya Genocide Day', the anniversary of the outbreak of violence in northern Rakhine State in 2017. Although the rally appeared peaceful, this huge political gathering by the Rohingyas raised some serious security concerns among the government officials. See: 'Genocide Day: Thousands of Rohingya rally in Bangladesh camps' (Al Jazeera, 25 August 2019) www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/25/genocide-day-thousands-of-rohingya-rally-in-bangladesh-camps. Shortly after this in September 2019, Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence recommended installing fences around the refugee camps as an extraordinary measure to resolve the increased security concern. Installation of barbed wire began in November 2019. See: The New Indian Express, 'Bangladesh Starts Fencing Rohingya Camps' The New Indian Express (Dhaka, 25 November 2019) www.newindianexpress.com/world/2019/Nov/25/bangladesh-starts-fencing-rohingya-camps-2066792.html.

⁷¹ FE Online Desk, 'All-out Efforts Bring No Breakthrough in Rohingya Repatriation, Home Minister Says' The Financial Express (Dhaka, 6 January 2021) https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/all-out-efforts-bring-no-breakthrough-in-rohingya-repatriation-home-minister-says-1609946983#google_vignette.

- In August 2022, the then-Home Minister announces cell phone tracking of camp residents to address drug-smuggling and alleges a relationship between the Myanmar regime, drug-smuggling, and a lack of effort towards repatriation.⁷²
- In May 2023, the then-Home Minister announces further Border Guard Bangladesh patrols to prevent drug trafficking as well as ensuring 'none from ARSA and [the] Arakan Army can enter the Rohingya camps', linking both to 'bloodshed' in the camps.⁷³
- In July 2023, the then-Home Minister links repatriation with the reduction of presence of ARSA and RSO 'separatists', who are deemed responsible for 'triggering violence'.⁷⁴
- In June 2024, the then-Home Minister states that repatriation is necessary to stop both drug and arms smuggling, which is contributing to violence in the camps.⁷⁵

The link between repatriation and security is logical: repatriation removes individuals deemed to be committing crime; therefore, the act of repatriation reduces crime. The slight shift in focus also reflects the evolving risks-prolonged displacement can heighten vulnerabilities such as trafficking and black-market activity.

Interestingly, only five of the statements that discussed security also discuss accountability, often within the context of taking a holistic approach to the crisis.⁷⁶ This limited overlap is likely due to the resource-intensive and time-consuming nature of accountability measures, which may not guarantee the desired outcomes.

⁷² Tribune Desk, 'Drug smuggling: Army troops could be deployed in Rohingya camps' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 28 August 2022) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/293066/drug-smuggling-army-troops-could-be-deployed-in.

⁷³ BSS, 'Security is being strengthened on Myanmar border to check drug intrusion: Home Minister' (BSS News, 23 May 2023) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/126985.

⁷⁴ Shaikh Azizur Rahman, 'Seven Rohingya Refugees Killed in Violence in Bangladesh' (Voice of America, 8 July 2023) www.voanews.com/a/seven-rohingya-refugees-killed-in-violence-in-bangladesh-/7172474.html.

⁷⁵ Staff Correspondent, 'Myanmar Armed Groups' Movement in Rohingya Camps: Home Minister' Prothom Alo English (Cox's Bazar, 31 May 2024) <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/rzktudyisk>.

⁷⁶ See BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057; Kamal Uddin Ahmed, 'Hasina's Pitch for Solving the Rohingya Crisis' (The Diplomat, 11 October 2022) <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/hasinas-pitch-for-solving-the-rohingya-crisis/>.

Economic Interests

In the 110 statements examined, 11 referred to the need for repatriation based on economic interests.

References to economic interests have also evolved, corresponding to the increasing strain on Bangladesh's resources because of the prolonged crisis. The sole 2018 statement in this study refers to 'the impacts of Rohingya influx on Bangladesh's socio-economic life', necessitating urgent repatriation of the Rohingya.⁷⁷ In 2020 and early 2022, this socio-economic 'impact' is reframed as a 'burden'⁷⁸ that Bangladesh 'cannot bear'⁷⁹—a burden that can only be alleviated by repatriation.

By mid-2022, the statements highlight growing economic stress due to the pandemic's lingering effects, the diversion of Global North aid to the war in Ukraine, and the impact of increased US sanctions on Russia affecting third-party States⁸⁰ including Bangladesh.⁸¹ In the limited statements in this study, it is at this point that the then-Prime Minister provides figures as part of her argument; the cost to Bangladesh is 'USD 1.22 billion every year for the Rohingyas', noting that pledged international funding for the crisis was significantly behind.⁸² By late-2022 into 2023, bilateral meetings appear to pursue both support for the Rohingya and investment in Bangladesh⁸³—suggesting an effort to balance humanitarian appeals with 'economic diplomacy'.⁸⁴ In late 2023, the Government stated it had 'become necessary' to take the unprecedented step of seeking loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to make up the shortfall.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Release on PM makes 3 proposals for resolving Rohingya crisis' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 September 2018) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/16450e39-cff8-4ad8-a8a2-e25b5399aba7.

⁷⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Joint Response Plan- 2022 Launched To Provide Continued Humanitarian Support by the International Community to the Forcibly Displaced Rohingya' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 March 2022) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/b148922d-7784-4d8f-ae66-7a71ffe1d634.

⁸⁰ The reference to US sanctions is notable because the US has historically been the highest bilateral funder for the annual Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan (JRP). The JRP is an initiative led by the GoB in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to establish, fund, and implement humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya and host communities in Bangladesh. See: OCHA, 'Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan 2018' (OCHA) https://fts.unocha.org/plans/656/flows?f%5B0%5D=sourceOrganizationAllTypedName%3A114%3AGovernments&order=flow_property_simple_2&sort=desc.

⁸¹ BSS, 'Realise Bangladesh situation, be more active in Rohingya repatriation: PM to int. community' (BSS News, 7 July 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/70723; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Regarding discussions with Sri Lanka: BSS, 'PM Hasina seeks Sri Lanka's support for safe repatriation of Rohingyas' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 November 2022) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/299026/pm-hasina-seeks-sri-lanka-s-support-for-safe; regarding discussions with Japan: BSS, 'PM Urges Int'l Community for More Support for Rohingya Refugees' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 28 April 2023) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-urges-intl-community-more-support-rohingya-refugees-623422; regarding bearing the 'collective responsibility' of addressing the crisis, 'The socioeconomic, demographic and environmental cost [of which] is pushing Bangladesh to the limit': Tribune Report, 'MoFA: Further delay in Rohingya repatriation may put entire region at risk' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 August 2023) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/323471/mofa-further-delay-in-rohingya-repatriation-may.

⁸⁴ 'We have to give importance to economic diplomacy along with political diplomacy as the world now turns into a global village and we are dependent on one another.' As noted in BSS, 'Realise Bangladesh situation, be more active in Rohingya repatriation: PM to int. community' (BSS News, 7 July 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/70723. On trade and diplomacy with China, discussed further below, see also: AKM Moinuddin, 'China-Bangladesh: The Key Points in the Joint Statement' (Dhaka Courier, 12 July 2024) www.dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Reportage/China-Bangladesh-The-key-points-in-the-joint-statement/8310.

⁸⁵ Abul Kashem and Jahidul Islam, 'For the first time, Bangladesh seeks foreign loans to support Rohingyas' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 4 December 2023) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/first-time-bangladesh-seeks-foreign-loans-support-rohingyas-751106.

Notably, all the economic statements also refer to burden-sharing, underscoring the strain on Bangladesh's resources, infrastructure, and social services.

Four of the statements include references to the need for accountability measures;⁸⁶ two also emphasise the responsibility of States to avoid engaging with Myanmar including through trade and other forms of cooperation.⁸⁷ This is interesting because, although modest, Bangladesh has continued to trade with Myanmar throughout this study's period, including increasing imports from Myanmar.⁸⁸

Economic Considerations & China's Interests in Repatriation

Bangladesh's relationship with China should also be considered as an influence on Bangladesh's policy responses to the Rohingya crisis. China is central to Bangladesh's trade, being a primary source of raw materials for the Bangladesh garment industry.⁸⁹ Likewise, China funds 'all major infrastructure projects' and supports critical sectors like disaster management.⁹⁰ More broadly, China is heavily invested in the region due to its Belt and Road Initiative, with the Kyaukphyu deep seaport in Rakhine state, Myanmar being a crucial project.⁹¹

China has regularly and actively sought to mediate the Rohingya's repatriation. For example, in November 2017, China offered humanitarian assistance⁹² and helped to broker an initial repatriation agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar.⁹³ In September 2019, China also brokered the establishment of a 'tripartite joint working mechanism' with Bangladesh and Myanmar to review conditions and progress on the Rohingya's repatriation.⁹⁴ Finally, in March 2023, a delegation from Bangladesh, China, and India visited Rakhine to evaluate the region's preparedness for repatriation, raising hopes for progress.

Despite its possible humanitarian effects, this engagement can also be considered an effort to stabilize the region in order to expedite infrastructure projects. For this, China has been careful to keep Myanmar on side. For example, China voted against a UN General Assembly resolution urging the Myanmar government to end its military campaign in Rakhine and allow aid workers in, as well as establishing a UN special envoy to Myanmar. The resolution was nevertheless

⁸⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Release on PM makes 3 proposals for resolving Rohingya crisis' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 September 2018) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/16450e39-cff8-4ad8-a8a2-e25b5399aba7; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

⁸⁸ Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Yangon, Myanmar, 'Bilateral Trade Relations' (Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Yangon, Myanmar) <https://yangon.mofa.gov.bd/en/site/page/Bilateral-Trade-Relations>.

⁸⁹ 'Bangladesh Asks China for Help in Repatriating Rohingya Refugees' (Al Jazeera, 8 August 2022) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/8/bangladesh-asks-china-for-help-in-repatriating-rohingya-refugees>. See also 'Rohingya Issue: China Wants Repatriation to Start Soon' (The Daily Star, 28 May 2023) <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/rohingya-issue-china-wants-repatriation-start-soon-3331066>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Poppy McPherson, Paul Ruma, and Shoon Naing, 'China Struggles in New Diplomatic Role, Trying to Return Rohingya to Myanmar' (Reuters, 21 January 2020) <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/china-struggles-in-new-diplomatic-role-trying-to-return-rohingya-to-myanmar-idUSKBN1ZJ0SX/>.

⁹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Introduces China's Position on Issue of the Rohingya People' (19 November, 2017) https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/2681_663366/2683_663370/202406/t20240607_11406751.html.

⁹³ 'Bangladesh Asks China for Help in Repatriating Rohingya Refugees' (Al Jazeera, 8 August 2022) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/8/bangladesh-asks-china-for-help-in-repatriating-rohingya-refugees>.

⁹⁴ 'Rohingya Repatriation: Bangladesh, China, Myanmar to Evaluate Progress' (The Daily Star, 24 September 2019) <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/bangladesh-china-myanmar-jointly-evaluate-progress-over-rohingya-repatriation-1804615>.

adopted, with China's vote against the resolution joining Belarus, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Russia, Syria, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.⁹⁵

Such involvement by China highlights the complex geopolitical considerations influencing Bangladesh's policy approaches.

Environmental Interests

The environment was not initially highlighted as a motivating factor during the scoping discussions. However, it emerged as a concern in 11 of the examined statements, primarily emphasising the environmental degradation resulting from the increased population in Cox's Bazar.⁹⁶

Referencing the environmental impact in order to stress the need for repatriation serves two key purposes: first, it highlights the strain on the host community;⁹⁷ second, it underscores the long-term consequences for a country already vulnerable to climate change.⁹⁸

Each reference to environmental issues also includes a call for greater burden-sharing.

Additionally, six statements of the eleven linking environmental impact also address the need for accountability, aligning with the earlier referenced holistic policy approach to the crisis.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Agence France-Presse, 'China and Russia Oppose UN Resolution on Rohingya' (The Guardian, 24 December 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/24/china-russia-oppose-un-resolution-myanmar-rohingya-muslims>.

⁹⁶ The following statements discuss the negative environmental impact generally, with later footnotes discussing explicit concerns. See BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Joint Response Plan-2022 launched to provide continued humanitarian support by the International community to the forcibly displaced Rohingya' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 March 2022) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/b148922d-7784-4d8f-ae66-7a71ffe1d634; Tribune Report, 'MoFA: Further delay in Rohingya repatriation may put entire region at risk' Dhaka Tribune (Dhaka, 25 August 2023) www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/323471/mofa-further-delay-in-rohingya-repatriation-may; BSS, 'Full text of PM Sheikh Hasina's speech at UNGA' (BSS News, 23 September 2023) www.bssnews.net/news/148842; Abul Kashem and Jahidul Islam, 'For the first time, Bangladesh seeks foreign loans to support Rohingyas' The Business Standard (Dhaka, 4 December 2023) www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/first-time-bangladesh-seeks-foreign-loans-support-rohingyas-751106.

⁹⁷ Emphasising the direct impact on local communities, see: BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

⁹⁸ Emphasising the long-term impact on Bangladesh, see: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>.

⁹⁹ See: BSS, 'PM Places 4 Proposals before UNGA, Dubs Rohingya Crisis a Regional Threat' The Daily Star (New York, 28 September 2019) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-sheikh-hasina-places-4-proposals-dubs-rohingya-crisis-1806475; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sustainable solution of Rohingya issues lies on repatriation: Foreign Secretary Momen' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/fd3638be-ca1d-481a-890d-16bd27ceb087; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3; BSS, 'PM urges UN, global partners to take tangible actions for Rohingya repatriation' (BSS News, 22 September 2022) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/84057.

immediate assistance but does not assume long-term responsibility, Bangladesh's response is framed as critical yet finite.¹⁰⁸

Accountability is explicitly mentioned in only four of the ten statements that also discuss humanitarian values.¹⁰⁹ In each of these instances, the temporary nature of Bangladesh's assistance is reiterated, with an emphasis on how accountability for the actions that caused the crisis is essential to creating the conditions for a sustainable return and ultimately resolving the crisis.

Religious Identity as a Value?

Few, if any, public statements examined here cited support for the Rohingya as being rooted in a shared religious identity. Several factors may explain this. For instance, it could be due to the previous government's desire to distance itself from religious parties¹¹⁰ or a need to avoid alienating non-Muslim communities.¹¹¹ It may also reflect a strategic decision to reject Myanmar's framing of the Rohingya as 'Bangladeshi citizens'.¹¹² Finally, it could suggest that Bangladesh viewed collaboration with other Islamic States as the most effective avenue for pursuing legal and political solutions to the crisis.

¹⁰⁸ The emphasis on temporary nature of the support may also reflect a change in the general public's attitudes. Initially, host communities in Cox's Bazar welcomed the Rohingya from a humanitarian perspective. Many locals, seeing the Rohingya's vulnerability, distributed food, clothing, and money. Civil society organizations and religious groups also mobilized relief efforts, with donation drives and rallies held across the country. See: Palash Kamruzzaman, Bulbul Siddiqi and Kajal Ahmed, 'Navigating the shift in Bangladeshi host community's perceptions towards the Rohingya refugees: A declining sympathy' (Frontiers, 5 February 2024) www.frontiersin.org/journals/sociology/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1346011/full; Anas Ansar and Abu Faisal Md. Khaled, 'From solidarity to resistance: host communities' evolving response to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh' (2021) 6 Journal of International Humanitarian Action <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-021-00104-9>; Katie Arnold, 'A farmer, a techie: The Bangladeshis helping Rohingya' (Al Jazeera, 14 September 2017) www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/9/14/a-farmer-a-techie-the-bangladeshis-helping-rohingya.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'State Minister for Foreign Affairs emphasized on decisive global collective actions to ensure voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingyas' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 December 2019) https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/site/press_release/603f909e-1129-4c17-a77c-4a71f068b63f; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement to be delivered by H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Virtual Conference on Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2020) <https://mofa.gov.bd/site/page/6ed6a8ce-91dc-44c0-9f03-789ca71eae1>; BSS, 'Global inaction over Rohingya repatriation shocks Bangladesh: PM' (BSS News, 23 September 2021) www.bssnews.net/news-flash/18798; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Fifth Anniversary of the Forced Displacement of Rohingyas to Bangladesh' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 2022) https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/082ed88c-c8c5-411e-bfdc-a72cc4b983e3.

¹¹⁰ See: Obaidul Hamid, 'The other worldliness of secular politics' New Age (Dhaka, 26 March 2024) www.newagebd.net/article/228789/the-other-worldliness-of-secular-politics; Tahmina Rahman, 'From Revolutionaries to Visionless Parties: Leftist Politics in Bangladesh' (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 6 September 2022) <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/09/from-revolutionaries-to-visionless-parties-leftist-politics-in-bangladesh?lang=en>.

¹¹¹ Iffat Idris, 'Rohingya refugee crisis: impact on Bangladeshi politics' (K4D, 3 November 2017) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a5f298c40f0b652634c6f52/233-Rohingya-Refugee-Crisis-Impact-on-Bangladeshi-Politics.pdf>.

¹¹² Fortify Rights, 'Myanmar: New Evidence of Denial of Rohingya Citizenship' (Fortify Rights, 16 January 2020) www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2020-01-16/.

The Impact of a Change in Government

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned on 5 August 2024 amid a popular uprising, leading to the appointment of an interim government headed by Dr Muhammad Yunus. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether this political change has impacted the study's findings.

In the period since, the Interim Government indicated a shift in how it characterises the Rohingya—in an October 2024 interview with Voice of America, the Chief Adviser¹¹³ stated that the Rohingya were recognised as refugees under international law and Bangladesh was obligated to let the Rohingya into Bangladeshi territory to escape persecution in Myanmar.¹¹⁴

In a related shift, the Interim Government's Foreign Affairs Adviser also stated that repatriation currently appears *unfeasible*, therefore a greater emphasis on third-party resettlement is required.¹¹⁵

Those potential shifts aside, the core 'values' and 'interests' underlying these statements seem to have remained consistent. For example, in his first policy speech after assuming office, the Chief Adviser prioritised addressing the Rohingya crisis by renewing calls for sustained international support of humanitarian efforts for the Rohingya—a call for burden-sharing.¹¹⁶

Likewise, his September 2024 speech to the UN General Assembly, the Chief Adviser repeats the refrains discussed above; he raised the continued social, economic, and environmental costs of hosting the Rohingya, the 'growing risks with national and regional security implications for Bangladesh' and the importance of supporting 'the ongoing accountability processes in the ICJ and the ICC'.¹¹⁷ Throughout, he reiterated the critical need for international cooperation to resolve the crisis.¹¹⁸

Notably, the emphasis on burden-sharing remains constant or may have intensified. In addition to explicit calls for greater assistance from UN bodies such as the IOM,¹¹⁹ the Interim Government has alluded to the role of the UN Security Council in resolving the crisis.¹²⁰ Likewise, in addition to noting the need for regional engagement of ASEAN,¹²¹ the Interim Government has also called for cross-regional 'cooperation with organisations like ASEAN, ECOWAS [the Economic Community of West African States] and the African Union to address regional discord effectively.'¹²²

The consistency of themes—and particularly of the need for burden-sharing—suggests that these 'interests' and 'values' are rooted in enduring national priorities and constraints rather than the preferences of individual leaders. Thus, while leadership may change, deeper, structural factors appear to exert a strong influence on policymaking.

¹¹³ The head of the interim government is styled as Chief Adviser.

¹¹⁴ Anis Ahmed, 'VOA Interview: Muhammad Yunus on restoring order in Bangladesh' (Voice of America, 3 October 2024) www.voanews.com/a/voa-interview-muhammad-yunus-on-restoring-order-in-bangladesh-7808333.html.

¹¹⁵ Senior Correspondent, 'Bangladesh seeks to send 20,000 Rohingya refugees to the US annually' (Bdnews24.com, 10 September 2024) <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/ba90bb4a7d95>.

¹¹⁶ 'Bangladesh's Yunus promises support to Rohingya in first policy speech' (Al Jazeera, 18 August 2024) www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/18/bangladeshs-yunus-promises-support-to-rohingya-in-first-policy-speech.

¹¹⁷ UN, 'Address His Excellency Professor Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser, Government of Bangladesh' (UN, 27 September 2024) https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/79/bd_en.pdf; UNB, 'Rohingya crisis: Foreign adviser urges UN Security Council to take decisive action' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 27 September 2024) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/rohingya-crisis-foreign-adviser-urges-un-security-council-take-decisive-action-3713851.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Star Digital Report, 'Yunus urges expedited third-country resettlement of Rohingya refugees' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 8 September 2024) www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/yunus-urges-expedited-third-country-resettlement-rohingya-refugees-3697481.

¹²⁰ Jago News Desk, 'Rohingya crisis does not only concern Bangladesh: Yunus' (Jagonews24.com, 25 September 2024) www.jagonews24.com/en/national/news/77117.

¹²¹ UNB, 'Can't wait indefinitely, says Dr Yunus seeking int'l solution to Rohingya crisis' Prothom Alo English (Dhaka, 4 October 2024) <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/rbpgzflzng>; BSS, 'Chief adviser seeks safe zone guaranteed by UN for displaced people in Rakhine' Prothom Alo English (Dhaka, 14 October 2024) <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/79mq1mvidb>.

¹²² UNB, 'Rohingya crisis: Foreign adviser urges UN Security Council to take decisive action' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 27 September 2024) www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/rohingya-crisis-foreign-adviser-urges-un-security-council-take-decisive-action-3713851.

A Role For All Available Accountability Measures?

The broader purpose of this report series is to explore how political decision-making based on States' interests and values can influence the prioritisation of domestic and international justice measures to address atrocity crimes, particularly those experienced by the Rohingya people of Myanmar. Through examining Bangladesh's emphasis on repatriation, it is possible to also consider how the GoB framed accountability measures as supportive of repatriation and what factors might make pursuing accountability measures more attractive to the GoB as a means of advancing its interests and values.

In the total number of statements examined, 23 statements discuss the need for accountability or engagement with accountability mechanisms.

As noted above, perhaps because of its experience in managing two previous refugee influxes, the GoB emphasised the importance of seeking accountability from the outset. Likewise, accountability was more likely to be mentioned when discussing holistic approaches to repatriation: approximately 55% of the statements discussing environmental interests, 40% of the statements discussing humanitarian values, 36% of statements discussing economic interests, and 31% of statements appealing to burden-sharing also make calls for accountability measures. This contrasts with the 12% citing security concerns. This suggests that the GoB sees accountability measures as one part of a broader, sustainable approach to repatriation.

All statements that discuss accountability also discuss burden-sharing, suggesting that 'accountability' generally occurs in the context of collaboration (e.g. with the OIC) and in international institutions (e.g. the ICJ or the ICC). Notably absent from the statements examined is any reference to ongoing proceedings in Argentina under domestic legislation using the principle of universal jurisdiction,¹²³ or calls for use of Bangladesh's own domestic legal system. This is significant because the ICC's jurisdiction is limited to crimes partially committed in Bangladesh, a State Party, while the ICJ can only hold the State of Myanmar—not individuals—accountable.

While this study cannot definitively explain why certain accountability mechanisms are prioritised over others, the analysis of interests and values may offer insights.

First, accountability through collaborative measures and international institutions can reduce the risk of undermining diplomatic negotiations with Myanmar. This is important given that the statements

¹²³ "On 26 November 2021, the Second Chamber of the Federal Criminal Court in Buenos Aires launched a universal jurisdiction (UJ) case against Myanmar authorities for the Rohingya genocide, following a complaint filed by Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) in November 2019. BROUK's complaint alleged genocide and crimes against humanity committed in Myanmar by the military and civilian leadership against the Rohingya since 2012, including murder, enforced disappearance, torture, sexual violence, and imprisonment. In 2017 the Myanmar military launched a genocidal campaign which forced over 800,000 Rohingyas to flee, largely over the border to Bangladesh. These so-called "clearance operations" were conducted through widespread and systematic murder, rape and sexual violence, and other abuses. Rohingya who continue to live in Rakhine State face stringent restrictions on their freedom of movement as well as on accessing basic services including education and healthcare, a situation that has only been exacerbated in the wake of Cyclone Mocha in May 2023. Additionally, in February 2021 the military defied the results of democratic elections, staged a coup, and seized power in Myanmar in a campaign marked by further atrocities, including against the Rohingya. In addition to BROUK's UJ case in Argentina, there are currently multiple ongoing international efforts aimed at justice and accountability in Myanmar for crimes against the Rohingya, including a genocide case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) brought by The Gambia". See: Global Justice Centre, 'The Universal Jurisdiction Case Against Myanmar Argentina Court Considers International Crimes Against Rohingya' (Global Justice Centre, September 2023) www.globaljusticecenter.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Sept2023_ArgentinaMyanmarUJ_QA.pdf; Winona Xu, 'A Glimpse of Hope for the Rohingya Argentinian Arrest Warrant for Min Aung Hlaing in the First Universal Jurisdiction Case' (Verfassungsblog, 27 February 2025) [www.voanews.com/a/argentina-court-issues-international-arrest-warrant-for-myanmar-military-leader/7975748.html](https://verfassungsblog.de/argentinian-arrest-warrant-for-hlaing/#:~:text=Universal%20jurisdiction%20and%20the%20road%20to%20Argentina&text=In%202019%2C%20BROUK%20and%20six,genocide%20and%20crimes%20against%20humanity; Ingyin Naing, 'Argentina court issues international arrest warrant for Myanmar military leader' (Voice of America, 14 February 2025) <a href=).

consistently position Myanmar as solely responsible for the crisis and emphasise that Myanmar must cooperate for successful repatriation. Using domestic courts to hold accountable a government with whom Bangladesh is negotiating could derail such negotiations, thus scuppering Bangladesh's primary solution to the crisis—a safe, sustainable, and speedy repatriation. Situating accountability wholly on the 'international plane' allows Bangladesh to seek accountability while maintaining diplomatic dialogue.

Second, accountability through collaborative measures and international institutions somewhat insulates Bangladesh from regional diplomatic or economic consequences. This is because leveraging the resources of international institutions—rather than turning to its own domestic courts—allows Bangladesh to position itself as a responsible member of the international community abiding by international laws, rather than a lone adversary seeking redress. This approach helps preserve bilateral relationships with States like China¹²⁴ and India,¹²⁵ both of whom have strategic interests in Myanmar,¹²⁶ and safeguards Bangladesh's ability to participate in regional organisations, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), of which Myanmar is also a member.¹²⁷ Third, accountability processes in general require significant time and resources. The financial and administrative burden of pursuing such cases domestically would be considerable, especially given Bangladesh's already strained resources. By emphasising accountability measures in international fora, Bangladesh effectively 'shares the burden', leaving the global community to bear the costs and thus alleviating some strain on its own resources.

Despite not emphasising forms of domestic accountability, the above suggests that accountability remains a political priority for the GoB when framed as a shared responsibility among the international community. However, while accountability may be considered a critical component of a sustainable approach to repatriation, repatriation itself remains the highest priority.

This study suggests that the GoB may be most amenable to prioritising accountability measures that have collective backing, avoid direct confrontation, and align with its key policy goals. Importantly, this does not necessarily mean that accountability measures must operate solely on the international plane. Rather, it indicates that engaging the GoB on the use of its own mechanisms would need to consider how such measures align with Bangladesh's identified interests and values.

¹²⁴ China has disbursed over US\$7.5 billion in loans to Bangladesh since 1975. See: FE Online Desk, 'China now 4th largest source of foreign loans for Bangladesh' The Financial Express (Dhaka, 30 June 2024) <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/china-now-4th-largest-source-of-foreign-loans-in-bangladesh-experts-express-concerns-over-shorter-repayment-terms>.

¹²⁵ Since 2010, India has committed up to US\$7.36 billion in loans, with Bangladesh utilising US\$1.73 billion or 23 percent of the amount pledged by India. See: Rejaul Karim Byron and Ahsan Habib, 'PM's India Visit: Dhaka eyes fresh loans from Delhi' The Daily Star (Dhaka, 16 June 2024) www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/pms-india-visit-dhaka-eyes-fresh-loans-delhi-3635481.

¹²⁶ Sasiwan Chingchit, 'Myanmar's Relations with China and India: The ASEAN Perspectives' (National University of Singapore, 2021) www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-South-Asia-Scan-13.pdf; The Frontier Manipur, 'India and China's Strategic Interests in Myanmar: A Battle for Influence in a Troubled Nation' (The Frontier Manipur, 25 January 2025) <https://thefrontiermanipur.com/india-and-chinas-strategic-interests-in-myanmar-a-battle-for-influence-in-a-troubled-nation/>. BIMSTEC, 'National Security Chiefs' Meeting' (BIMSTEC) <https://bimstec.org/national-security-chiefs-meeting>.

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About the Asia Justice Coalition

Founded in 2018, the Asia Justice Coalition's purpose is to improve the legal landscape in Asia to ensure justice and accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Coalition operates through collaboration, resource-sharing, and coordinating efforts between local and international civil society organizations working in the region. Its work is accomplished by undertaking joint activities relating to justice and accountability and engaging in collective advocacy.

About the Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University

The Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) is a multi-disciplinary academic and research institute established in 2017 at BRAC University. The mission of the Centre is 'to promote global peace and social justice through the means of education and training, research and advocacy' and with the vision of 'a just, peaceful and inclusive society'. CPJ is playing a vibrant role for justice and accountability for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh through organising various national and international conferences, seminars, and public lectures. CPJ is also a co-signatory of an Amicus Curiae Observation to the International Criminal Court on behalf of Bangladeshi Non-Governmental Representatives.

The cover photograph represents the diversity, unity, longing for justice and cultural identity through the expressive symbolism of Mehdi (Henna) applied on the hands.

Each hand tells a story of a Rohingya girl's perception and interests of beauty highlighting the community's heritage.

By placing the hands in a circular harmony, the design emphasizes solidarity, justice, shared conception of beauty and values of Rohingya girls belonging to different backgrounds.

Cover Artist and Description: Mohammed Junaid