

**Conference Report –
The 2nd International Conference on the Rohingya Crisis in
Comparative Perspective**

Jointly Organized by:

**Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR), University College London (UCL) and
Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh**

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The UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR) and the Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS) at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, organized a two-day conference which was attended by scholars, activists, humanitarian workers, policymakers, and donors among others. The topics discussed covered diverse areas ranging from COVID-19 challenges in the camps from Rohingya case studies from different Rohingya hosting countries as well as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and justice issues.

Day 1: 3rd December 2020

Inaugural Session

The inaugural session was co-chaired by **Professor Peter Sammonds**, Founding Director and Department head-UCL IRDR, and **Professor Imtiaz Ahmed**, Director of CGS, University of Dhaka. **Professor Sammonds** started the conference by welcoming everyone, and then he moved on to laying out an outline of the two-day conference. After welcoming everyone, **Professor Imtiaz Ahmed** addressed the heightened attention over the Rohingya crisis and explained the reason by pointing to the clear indication of genocide as well as discussing the involvement of multiple international tribunals. He also highlighted the role of the Government of Bangladesh in managing the COVID-19 situation in the Rohingya camps. He addressed the International Court of Justice's provisional judgment and their recognition of the Rohingya identity as well as the misplaced attention on Bangladesh over the Rohingya issue instead of Myanmar.

Keynote speakers

His Excellency Robert Chatterton Dickson, British High Commissioner to the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and the chief guest **Masud Bin Momen**, the Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, were the two prominent speakers who addressed the conference. **Mr. Dickson** spoke briefly about the importance of including Rohingyas in the discussions concerning this crisis. He also highlighted how prosecution could offer restitution. He addressed the COVID-19 situation in the camps and how the situation has been properly handled. He discussed in detail the threats the Rohingya crisis holds to Bangladesh, the Rohingyas, Myanmar, and the entire Indo-pacific region. He laid out some elements for Myanmar to introduce and to resolve the crisis.

He pressed on the issue of sustainable repatriation and the importance of continued humanitarian assistance till then. The Foreign Secretary **Masud Bin Momen** spoke briefly about the distress of the Rohingyas and their consequent influxes to Bangladesh. He also highlighted that Bangladesh is no longer in a position to bear this burden. He also spoke about the efforts of the government and its partners in minimizing the pandemic situation in the camps. He identified repatriation as the only priority of Bangladesh and laid out the causes for a failed repatriation. He explained why a portion of the Rohingyas has been relocated to Bhasan Char. The foreign secretary referred to the steps the Myanmar government and the international community need to take in this issue. He concluded by explaining the repercussions of delayed repatriation.

Q&A session

Many questions were addressed, including the Rohingya crisis being a security issue for Bangladesh, the relocation of Rohingyas to Bhasan Char, the likelihood of international intervention, and the ICJ verdict. The Foreign Secretary described the Rohingya crisis being a security threat for the entire region and assured everyone about the Bhasan Char issue. He also rejected the likelihood of international intervention. **Mr. Dickson** expressed his concerns over the Bhasan Char issue and advised what needs to be addressed in this particular case. He also touched on the ICJ issue recognizing the processes and sanctions as well as the United Nations' role.

Panel 1: Discussion on COVID-19 challenges in the camps

This session was moderated by **Professor Amena Mohsin**, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka. The first day of the conference had 4 different panel sessions. The first panel on COVID-19 challenges in the camps had 4 speakers. **Professor Amena Mohsin** discussed briefly -the issues that compounded together to create problems because of the COVID-19 Virus. She also discussed Bangladesh and the private sector's role in curbing the Situation. The first speaker **Dr. A.K.M Taifur Rahman**, Executive Director of Health Management BD Foundation presented a detailed report with statistics of the COVID-19 situation in the camps. He also discussed the facilities matching international standards available in the Rohingya camps concerning this pandemic. The second speaker was **Barrister Sara Hossain**, Executive Director, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, who outlined the rights of the Rohingya community and their access to the justice system in Bangladesh. She highlighted the informal justice mechanisms

through community and organization based approaches as well as the changes in these mechanisms after the pandemic. She also discussed the increased sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as an impact of the COVID-19 situation and the restriction of services. She referred to the barriers of justice and stressed the issue of access to connectivity.

Asif Munir, a Development professional, who is also a human rights activist and a cultural activist, outlined the distinction between human smuggling and human trafficking. He discussed the sea route in this region used by the human smugglers. He highlighted the key challenges concerning the COVID-19 situation in the context of human smuggling. He also referred to the challenges of refugeehood and the security dimension of the entire issue. **Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta**, Executive Director of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), briefly discussed the issue of stigmatization and refugees. She addressed the impact of COVID-19 on both the Rohingya and host communities. Rohingyas were affected in terms of their income, education, and legal services among others. The pandemic largely affected the host communities' mobility, income, and social support. She referred to better coordination and access to knowledge to address the concerns of the hosts. She also raised the general point on gender and diversity in social cohesion.

Q&A Session

This session raised discussion on multiple issues including the difference of practice regarding informal dispute resolution in Rohingya camps and informal dispute resolution in Bangladesh, the comparison of figures related to the covid-19 cases between Rohingyas and the hosts, and the situation of the Rohingya people with disabilities in the camps. The session discussed different policies of the host countries towards the Rohingya people as well as the perception and the role of politics involved in the Rohingya issue. Another issue about the role of media in alleviating the stigmatization of the Rohingya community was also raised.

Panel 2: Discussion on Natural Hazards Perspective

This session was moderated by **Professor Peter Sammonds**. **Dr. Akhtar Alam**, Research Fellow, UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction discussed the likelihood of impacts on the Rohingya community from natural hazards. He mentioned the natural hazards Bangladesh had faced over the years as well as addressed the vulnerability of the Rohingya population in the camps.

Given the elevation of the camps, the probability remained that they would be affected by the high-intensity wind rather than the storm surge. His research assessed cyclone risk of the whole Cox's Bazar district as well as highlighted the vulnerability of camp-1E, 1W, 7, and 13. He stressed that given the demographic component and physical environment of the camp special attention is needed to increase the resilience of the Rohingya refugees.

Professor Rashedur M. Rahman, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, North South University, started his presentation by giving a figure of landslide casualties in the Rohingya camps. He addressed the reasons behind the landslide. The reasons included plants and trees being removed to shelter and facilitate the Rohingyas, the quality of the soil of the region, the nature of habitat in the camps as well as the prolonged monsoon season in Bangladesh. He stated the factors behind the landslides as well. He highlighted the steps needed to deal with landslide. This presentation included options such as to use real-time data on the landslide, rainfall, and innovation among others.

Sebastian Kaminski, Structural Engineer in Arup's Specialist Technology and Research Team, discussed the natural hazard and shelter design in the Rohingya refugee camps. He started his presentation by outlining the elements a shelter needs to provide. He focused on the structural aspects of a shelter. The physical environment of this region heightens the probability of natural hazards, and the insects and the humidity easily rot timber and bamboo. After that, he proceeded to give an overview of shelter evolution. Old refugees evolved their shelters to a slightly permanent nature with mud-brick, mud-wall systems while Rohingyas from the 2016 influx built shelter with whatever thing they could access, like timber, plastic sheets, and ropes. The 2016 refugees created more vulnerabilities by cutting down trees. The NGOs used bamboos to provide a safer and durable shelter. From 2018 onwards, NGOs have progressed to build shelters with mixed materials, and from 2019 NGOs started to build two-storied bamboo shelters. The concept of lightweight steel shelter is still being explored, but all of these shelters are still vulnerable to cyclones. The endeavour is there to make them more resistant.

Professor A. S. M. Maksud Kamal, Department of Disaster Science and Management, University of Dhaka and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of Dhaka discussed the Rohingya relocation to Bhasan Char by the government of Bangladesh. He addressed the United Nations resolution which states the atrocities against the Rohingyas as “crimes against humanity”. He outlined the environmental hazard from this massive exodus. Deforestation in the camp area consisted of a loss of 1.67% in the forest area of Cox’s Bazar for which the cost estimation is five billion taka. He highlighted the depletion of the groundwater. Continuation of the current usage of groundwater will likely drop the level by more than 20m by 2022. His department researched the landslide susceptibility of the Kutupalong camp which outlined nearly unstable, critically unstable, and an unstable number of households and inhabitants. He explained the environmental and socio-economic reasons behind the political decision of relocation to Bhasan Char. He addressed the morphological evolution and shifting of the island depocenter as well as the erosion and accretion among other things to emphasize the stability of Bhasan Char Island. The island is gradually merging towards the coast of the Bay of Bengal and the size of the island is increasing.

Q&A Session

The discussion included the stability of the Bhasan Char Island, where **Professor A.S.M. Maksud Kamal** assured its geological stability and sustainable infrastructure. The vulnerability of the shelters in the Rohingyas camps was discussed. Initiatives to minimize the impacts of cyclones and the interdisciplinary activities to reduce vulnerability also came to focus. The discussion also included the politics of relocation and repatriation.

Panel 3: Rohingya case studies from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia

This session was moderated by **Dr. Kazi Fahmida Farzana**, Assistant Professor, International Relations, University of Sharjah, UAE. **Dr. Morad Alshafi**, Assistant Professor, International Relations, University of Sharjah, UAE started his presentation by stating the goals of providing a socio-historical background and outline the findings on the sociolinguistic situation of generations of Rohingya speaking refugees in the Saudi context. He discussed the phases of the Rohingya exodus in Saudi Arabia and their causes along with the figures representing the Rohingya population.

He highlighted the 2017 report indicating the steps taken by Saudi Arabia regarding the Burmese community. He stated the socioeconomic status of the Rohingyas is below average. The results of a research on second and third generations of Rohingyas in Saudi showed the departure from typical patterns of language shift over three generations. The Rohingyas used Arabic in media, religious, and public domains while using the Rohingya language in the home and ethnic communities. He also presented the results of another research on the language attitudes of the second generation Rohingyas towards Rohingya and Arabic. He highlighted factors encouraging Rohingya language maintenance which ranged from demographic factors to the Rohingya ethnic community's connectedness.

Dr. Aishwarya Pandit, Associate Professor at Jindal, Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, presented a documentary on the Rohingya refugees in India. The documentary centers on the Rohingyas facing an uncertain future amidst the country's social and demographic challenges. The documentary highlights the Indian perspective of the crisis. **Dr. Bulbul Siddiqi**, Associate Professor of Political Science and Sociology, North South University, addressed the problems of repatriation in the past and future. He discussed his experience of visiting the Cox's Bazar area after the 2017 influx as a researcher. He highlighted the Government of Bangladesh's perspective of voluntary and dignified repatriation of the Rohingyas. One refugee repatriation model might not be applicable for all the cases. He addressed the challenges of refugee repatriations. He discussed the opinions of experts, researchers, and civil society on mitigating the vulnerability that lingers from delayed repatriation. He stressed on comprehensive approaches in the face of security threats arising from the crisis.

Dr. Kazi Fahmida Farzana presented the figures of the documented and undocumented Rohingya refugees in Myanmar. She highlighted Malaysia's policy towards the Rohingyas which allows the Rohingya refugees to remain invisible and scattered. Most of the host community respondents in her research hold a negative perception of the Rohingya refugees. The Rohingya refugees' challenges in Malaysia guide them towards hopelessness. There is also a presence of intra-community conflict amidst the Rohingya community in Malaysia. **Dr. Farzana** also outlined the coping strategies of the refugees in the face of challenges.

She briefly discussed the literature on social resistance. She mentioned that religion is an informal form of resilience for the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Q&A Session

The discussion focused on the issues such as the rights of the Rohingya refugees in Saudi Arabia, the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, and the issue of their resettlement and relocation to Bhasan Char. The international community's role in resolving the Rohingya crisis was discussed as well.

Panel 4: Discussion on Human Rights and Refugee Advocacy: Activist Perspectives

This session was moderated by **Dr. Jessica Field**, Lecturer in Humanitarian Studies, Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London. **Dr. Field** explained her panel as a discussion-based panel rather than a presentation based panel. She briefly addressed the global deteriorating human rights environment.

Lamees Hafeez, Interim Director of Operations at Muslim Council of Britain, addressed the shift from a very needs-based approach to a rights-based approach. She highlighted that protection is a buzzword these days. However, protection from the ground-based level is absent. **Rahima Begum** Activist, Researcher & Founding Director of International Human Rights Organization Restless Beings, stated the visibility of discussions and openness about the issues revolving around the human dignity of the Rohingyas which was not common before. **Ali Johar**, Rohingya Youth Leader based in India, mentioned the role of social media in humanitarian issues. **Rahima Begum** highlighted the role of social media in mobilizing people and she also mentioned the problematic nature of social media creating negativity. **Lamees Hafeez** discussed that the social media could become a driver of conflict, if not moderated. **Dr. Field** underlined the issue of online fundraising and then asked the speakers about the change in the funding environment in the last few years. **Rahima Begum** stated the difficulties of funding, especially in the pandemic situation. She also mentioned funding bodies are not available today as they used to 10 years ago.

Ali Johar, stated-that most of their funding comes from crowdfunding sources. He spoke about how social media has publicized the atrocities on the Rohingya community as well as spread fake news. He also mentioned the positive impact on the Rohingyas in getting education through social

media. In response to the question regarding social media having the ability to pressure Myanmar for repatriation **Ali Johar**, stated that repatriation depends on the policymakers and the role of governments. **Rahima Begum** pointed out the limited role of media in this issue. **Lamees Hafeez** explained how media can influence and raise awareness which can influence political opinions. She also mentioned the influence of funding in attaining power. In response to the question of collaboration and fundraising **Rahima Begum**, stressed the issue of collaboration as it can have a bigger impact. **Lamees Hafeez** brought out the issue of competition for funding between organizations as well as global alliances on the funding issue. She highlighted the necessity of organizations to collaborate instead of competing with each other for funds. **Ali Johar** discussed the misuse of online funding and growing distrust because of it.

Rahima Begum stated- that the activists and academic community need to be prepared for predicting genocidal regimes. She emphasized on placing dignity at the centre and spoke about the genuine global reflection on approaching communities. **Ali Johar**, stated- that the solution to the Rohingya crisis lies within the Rohingyas and Myanmar. Rohingyas should be given a chance to speak and opportunities to choose for themselves. **Lamees Hafeez** ended the panel discussion by pointing out the priority of connectedness between different human rights issues.

Day 2: 4th December 2020

Dr. Bayes Ahmed welcomed everyone to Day 2 of the International Conference on Rohingya Crisis. The event was organized by UCL Institute of Risk and Disaster Reduction and the Centre for Genocide Studies at the University of Dhaka; and was funded by the British Academy and the Royal Society of London. There were 5 different panel discussions on the day, the first of them covering the camp scenarios in Bangladesh: violence and protection, gender and host community impact; followed by a session in conversation with Rohingya activists; the third panel comprised justice issues and the International Court of Justice; the fourth session had an exhibition of Rohingya documentaries and photos; and the closing session saw the confluence of the academicians and practitioners (diplomats and political leaders) of (and stationed in) the United Kingdom.

Panel 1: Discussion on Rohingya Crisis and Bangladesh

The panel was moderated by **Dr. Md. Touhidul Islam**, Associate Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka. He stated the importance of the session vis-a-vis the Rohingya people's refugeehood in Bangladesh, and introduced the panel speakers.

Dr. Niloy Ranjan Biswas, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, in the presentation of the study conducted by **Professor Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed** [Professor of International Relations, and Director, Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka] **and himself**, focused on the dialectical relationship between protection and violence against the Rohingyas in Myanmar as well as in Bangladesh, based on the micro-narratives collected from the Rohingya camps. They argued that a scenario of unsafety is certain on the Myanmar end whereas the safety provided by Bangladesh bears elements of uncertainty. **Mr. Mohammad Atique Rahman**, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, presented the research conducted by **Professor Dr. Amena Mohsin** [Professor, Department of

International Relations, University of Dhaka], **and himself**. They explored the creation of a genocidal discourse and gender-based violence against the Rohingyas through various dimensions of manifest and latent clusters of violence. **Ms. Tanzina Rahman**, Research Assistant, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka, presented the research undertaken by **Dr. Md. Touhidul Islam** and herself, focused on the resilience of the Rohingya hosting communities in Ukhia and Teknaf camps in Cox's Bazar and tried to explore whether they are just adjusting or if they are strategizing for everyday survival. They have explored the positive and negative coping strategies and gradual adaptation process of the host community of Ukhia and Teknaf.

Q&A Session

There were questions raised regarding the roles of the IGO and INGOs during the pandemic and the environmental costs, the economic condition of the host communities, ways to deal with possible vengeful trauma of the Rohingya women, and the repatriation process. It was addressed by **Professor Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed** that the reforestation of the coastal areas has been undertaken

and **Professor Dr. Amena Mohsin** commented that rather than taking the vengeance by their own selves the Rohingyas were keen about placing their faith in God - so that the memory of the trauma fades away. **Ms. Tanzina Rahman** noted the disproportionate nature of work opportunities. **Dr. Md. Touhidul Islam** added that the societal fabric was undermined due to a number of issues such as drug peddling. Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed noted that in the last 37 months 180 deaths had been reported in the camps, the situation still happens to be much safer than New York, or Detroit, or Chicago.

Panel 2: In Conversation with Rohingya Activists

Professor Miwako Hosoda, Vice President of Seisa University, and **Dr. Niloy Ranjan Biswas**, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, co-moderated the session on the voices of the Rohingya activists. The first speaker, **Mr. Zaw Min Htut**, or **Mr. Lokman Hakim** [President of Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan], fled Myanmar in 1998 and sought asylum in Japan. He was the first Rohingya refugee in Japan, obtaining refugee status in 1992. He has made it his life's struggle to help other Rohingyas obtain refugee status in Japan - which is a tough task, for the government is unsupportive of the Rohingya populace (and calls them 'Burmese Muslims in the Rakhine state'). He thanked the Japanese people, however, for their continuous support.

Mr. Hla Myint [Rohingya Intellectual Group, Sydney, Australia] emphasized that the vast majority of the state of Myanmar has failed to incorporate the minorities and asserted that the role of Aung San Suu Kyi has been pivotal in creating such alienation. Along with the minority, the Burmese military has expelled more than 50,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh in a genocidal act. By drawing the role of intergovernmental organizations, he advised that Myanmar should follow the order of the International Court of Justice.

Ms. Yasmin Ullah, an activist at the Rohingya Human Rights Network, Canada, pointed out to her identity crisis as a result of being displaced too many times and the hurdles she had to go through to finally establish her roots in Canada in 2017. In a hybridized existence, a lot of Rohingyas live. She emphasized upon gaining fluency on the policy making language and strategizing and connecting people.

Q&A Session

The question and answer session revolved around the responses of the countries of Rohingya diaspora, e.g. Japan and the United States. The sustainable solution proposed by **Mr. Zaw Min Htut** was on repatriation and increased international pressure on Myanmar, most preferably by the Bangladeshi government. **Professor Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed** pointed out the importance of a political leadership to grow out of the Rohingyas, particularly at the global level. It was advised that the Canadian and the Dutch government is approached for this matter for quicker outcomes. **Ms. Yasmin Ullah** pointed out the historical trauma and the futility of advocacy in the absence of a proper coping mechanism. **Mr. Hla Myint** explained the portrayal of the Rohingyas as a hostile group in Myanmar and the reality of the Burmese government in not taking the responsibility because of their lack of political will. **Professor Miwako Hosoda** pointed out the difference between Japanese government response and that of the Japanese people and hoped for the future coordination and cooperation of the two responses in assisting the Rohingyas. **Dr. Niloy Ranjan Biswas** observed the government responses and hoped that further cooperation will be undertaken by the international community.

Panel 3: Discussion on ICJ and Justice Issues

The panel, revolving around the Discussion on International Court of Justice (ICJ) and Justice Issues, was moderated by **Professor Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed** [Professor of International Relations, and Director, Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka]. **His Excellency Mr. Benoit Préfontaine**, the High Commissioner of Canada in Bangladesh, had iterated the notion of responsibility and his personal experiences in making the accountability issues firm and clear in the international fora - as it is vital to keep the issue in the international spotlight and it was necessitated that all the countries must come forward, like Canada and the Netherlands had done, for upholding the Rohingya rights and justice. Canada's response to the Rohingya crisis is aligned with three key principles of its foreign policy: promoting equal human rights, upholding respect for international law and the rules-based international order. **Mr. Arsalan Suleman**, Counsel, Foley Hoag's International Litigation and Arbitration Practice, stated the initial weakened position of lodging a case against Myanmar in the International Criminal Court, as Myanmar was not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Therefore, the decision to shift to the International Court of Justice was hailed, as both Myanmar and Gambia were parties to the genocide convention - by dint of which Gambia could hold Myanmar obliged for violating the principles of 1. taking action against genocide, 2. preventing genocide and 3. punishing genocide.

Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Senior Fellow, North South University and Former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, illuminated the legal [the ICJ] and semi-legal pathways [the UNGA and HRC], along with individual country efforts to ensure accountability and justice for Rohingyas, and brought upon a framework of sustainable resolution to the Rohingya crisis. It is particularly of note that Bangladesh has not sought justice for the 1971 genocide, and even so, had gone on to the international courts for upholding justice and seeking compensations for the Rohingyas.

Q&A Session

The question and answer session revolved around the themes of ensuring absolute protection for the Rohingyas in Myanmar, armed protections and safe zones, the role of Australian lawyers in ensuring justice for the Rohingyas, countries supplying arms to Myanmar, lobbying capability of the OIC states against Myanmar, third-country accountability (those who are financing or supporting organizations in Myanmar for dealing with the crisis), the diplomatic bargaining capacity of Bangladesh on China in dealing with the Rohingya issue, and whether the EU and Commonwealth could start thinking about sanctions.

Ambassador Md. Shahidul Haque replied that armed protections and safe zones are currently not the reality and asked the Rohingyas must raise the political goals. Bangladesh is pursuing multi-prong diplomatic efforts in bilateral and global fora for accountability and non-accountability. As for dealing with China, the Myanmar authority never comes to any tripartite negotiations in good nature. Bangladesh was also upping its consultation with India, given that it would join the UNSC the next month. Even the OIC has come forward in May 2018 when the first resolution was adopted in Dhaka - however, it should be noted that the OIC is fragmented and some of the Asian Muslim countries are not too keen to pursue accountability and justice for the Rohingyas.

Mr. Suleman said that for showing the connection between the arms sales and the genocide, one has to show the connection that those arms were used for clearance operations - and that way the third countries could be implicated in the way Myanmar is. Otherwise it will be a much weaker case because sovereign states hold the right to purchase and produce arms for defence.

Ambassador Haque said that arms purchase and usage by Myanmar could be tracked through the UN report, Human Rights Watch report as well as with the SIPRI report. He also emphasized focusing on Myanmar's investment records and the nature of the business which is mostly military-run. He requested to present these to the OIC and the ICJ.

His Excellency Mr. Préfontaine said that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization can only take action when one of the member states is attacked - then the member state can call others to come to its defence. Due to Myanmar being a breakaway Commonwealth country, it will be unprecedented for the Commonwealth to come up with sanctions against Myanmar.

Panel 4: Rohingya Documentary and Photo Exhibition

There was a documentary on the Rohingyas by **Mr. Mahmud Rahman**, who had produced an account of how the refugees lived their life in Cox's Bazaar and what they had faced in Myanmar. The narratives of the Rohingya people, especially those of the women and children were particularly touching. The helplessness that the Rohingyas faced in land had driven them to being lost at sea - by crossing the sea through informal and often illegal means. It was followed by a Rohingya photo exhibition, courtesy of **Mr. Edward Lawrenson** [who had worked with **Dr. Bayes Ahmed**] for developing an early warning system for rainfall-triggered landslides in the Rohingya camps, which was already vulnerable due to structural fragility- and brought out the refugees' lives in general in Cox's Bazar and the camp children's education in particular.

Q&A Session

Questions were asked on the Malaysia resettlement of Rohingyas, the particular challenges about filming within the camps, the futures of the camps, and the questions raised by the children. **Mr. Mahmud** answered that for the youth it was a desperate drive to explore new opportunities. The Rohingyas hold onto this belief that there is no future within the camps - but once you are out of the camps, you have a future. Although he felt sad after seeing the squalid conditions of the camps, **Mr. Lawrenson** still enjoyed the exuberance of the kids and wished to portray that.

Closing Session

Professor Peter Sammonds, Founding Director and Department head-UCL IRDR, and Co-Chair of the Closing Session, stated that the case studies from different countries enriched the conference. Also, the Rohingya communities speaking out directly in the conference was an interesting matter. The pictures and the documentary were very moving and the anger against Myanmar was expressed diplomatically. The conference had enriched everyone academically as well as in public perception and politically, and Professor Sammonds hoped that the research will enhance everyone's understanding of the Rohingyas while assisting in policymaking. The programme was summed up by the Professor and he hoped that the deliberations will be continued to keep the issue in the public eye.

Her Excellency Ms. Saida Muna Tasneem, High Commissioner for Bangladesh to the United Kingdom, and Permanent Representative to IMO, emphasized upon the Father of the Nation's pledge to stand firmly by the side of the oppressed of the world. It was highlighted that in 1974, the land boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar was settled, whereas in 2014, the maritime boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar was settled by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Taking up the words of the Prime Minister, it was iterated that the Rohingya Crisis originated in Myanmar and any sustainable solution for this crisis should be found in Myanmar. Bangladesh and Myanmar do not even have controversial bilateral relations other than this one particular issue. It was also reminded that in 1970 age and in 1992 Myanmar and Bangladesh settled the Rohingya issue bilaterally - but now the problem has turned from bilateral to an international one as it is now threatening the security of the entire region.

In 2017 Bangladesh signed a document regarding the safe return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar and tried repatriating them to Myanmar in 2018 and 2019 -but the Rohingyas wished for 13 guarantees upon return. These ranged from legal status to safety, security and equal rights. However, the Rohingyas are still persecuted in Myanmar despite pressures by the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Security Council, the European Union and the OIC. This is because the countries are not pressuring Myanmar and are continuing to trade (the rate of which is getting higher). She felt that a lack of sincerity prevails among the international community and their pressure on Bangladesh rather than on Myanmar. She referred to the British parliamentary reactions against the disenfranchisement of the Rohingyas and various other suggestions regarding the Rohingyas in the Commonwealth, and emphasized that the 1982 Citizenship Law was criticized from all quarters. She commended the United Kingdom for continuously putting up the Rohingya agenda on the United Nations. At the same time it was implied that the international community is pursuing an appeasement policy vis-à-vis Myanmar in regards to the Rohingya crisis, and they are not bearing the burden of third country resettlement.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Member of Parliament for Islington North on behalf of the Labour Party, argued that the first concern should be the humanitarian one. He pointed out the necessity of long-term commitments and pulling in a huge number of resources. Drawing attention to the sheer truth that the refugees are human beings just like any other people was the strongest message of Mr. Corbyn. Firstly, he wished for the world to take cognizance of the plight of the Rohingya people and the historical abuse they had suffered; secondly, he wanted the world to take note of how Bangladesh had welcomed the refugees while many other countries in the region had not; and thirdly, for the European leaders to understand that while they are dealing with refugee problems in their shores - the number is nothing like what Bangladesh is facing. He posed the question of where the pressure on Myanmar is, to cease the abuse of Rohingya people. He ended with the recommendation that the aid must go beyond food and health concerns to education - so that the young Rohingya boys and girls do not lose their valuable years of education.

Afterwards, **Professor Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed** summed up the conference, and **Professor Peter Sammonds** gave his thanks to everyone.