

CHAPTER II

THE DISCRIMINATION OF ROHINGYA

In this chapter the writer will tell the readers about the problem or the dependent variable. The writer will also show the detail of the problem in general such as Myanmar profile, Rohingya profile, the historical background and the condition nowadays. This data is to identify and classify the main problem in order to make the writer easy in analyzing the data.

As we know that the main problem or the case study is the problem that happens in Myanmar. Humanitarian issue especially discrimination already exists in Myanmar since long time ago. It happened in Rakhine state or known as Rohingya problem. The writer will give the information about the problem that consists of the profile of Myanmar, profile of Rohingya, the data about Rohingya's condition historically and after the independence of Myanmar, and then the last is the forms of discrimination towards Rohingya.

A. Profile of Myanmar

Myanmar or Burma (Union of Myanmar) is a sovereign state located in Southeast Asia, bordering Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal between Bangladesh and Thailand. Geographically, Myanmar is adjacent to China (north), Laos and Thailand (east), Andaman Sea (south) and in the west there is Bengal

bay, Bangladesh and India.⁶ Located in a line with Bangladesh makes the people of Myanmar and Bangladesh freely cross each other before the independence especially since the kingdom era. Because of free crossing, many people of both countries try to find better life throughone another. This is also the beginning of Rohingya people in Myanmar even though they physically and culturally prefer the same with Bangladesh people.



Figure 2.1: *Map of Myanmar*

Source:(Lonely Planet)⁷

Total area of Myanmar is 676,578 km² with the population of 56,890,418 people according to CIA’s data in July 2016. The population of Burmese consists of Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2% and other 5%. Even so Myanmar has various religions which are Buddhist 87%, Christian 6.2%, Muslim 4.3%, Animist 0.8%, Hindu 0.5%, Atheist 0.1%

⁶ Central Intelligence Agencies. (2017, January 12). *EAST & SOUTHEAST ASIA :: BURMA*. Retrieved January 20, 2017, from The World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

⁷ Lonely Planet. (n.d.). *Map of Myanmar*. Retrieved December 18, 2016, from Lonely Planet: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/asia/myanmar/>

and other 0.2%. The Burmese (people of Myanmar) used Burmese language as their national language. The data shows clearly that the population of Rakhine is larger than the Rohingya and also the population between Buddhist and Muslim. This is one factor that causes Rohingya people got discrimination and cannot do anything.

Myanmar became independent on 4th January 1948 from UK and they have ever been a part of India until 1937. The capital city of Myanmar is Rangoon (Yangon). Myanmar is controlled by president as the head of government. Nowadays, the president of Myanmar is Htin Kyaw as the 9th president with the new system of governance which is democratic system.

Governance system in Myanmar is changing day to day since the first administration. The Military system of Myanmar has been approved by the world, and it was shown by the system that they applied which sometimes contradicts with other people. Their military system makes them hard to be intervened by others, so they kept their domestic affairs and makes the people hard to reach. Nowadays, the political system of Myanmar began to change to be democratic system since long time ago. The table below will show the changing of governance system from time to time and the political party.

Table 2.1: *List Presidents of Myanmar*

Head of State	Name	Period	Political party
President	Saw Shwe Thaik	1948-1952	Anti-Fascist People Freedom Party of the
	Ba U	1952-1957	
	Win Aung	1957-1962	
Chairman of the	Ne Win	1962-1974	

Revolutionary council			Socialist Program of Burma
President	Ne Win	1974-1981	Party of the Socialist Program of Burma
	San Yu	1981-1988	
	Sein Lwin	July – August 1988	
	Aye Ko	12–19 August 1988	
	Maung Maung	19 August 1988 – 18 September 1988	
Chairman of the State Law & Order Restoration Council	Saw Maung	1988-1992	Military
	Than Shwe	1992-1997	
Chairman of the State Peace & Development Council	Than Shwe	1997-2011	Military
President	Thein Sein	2011-2016	Union Solidarity and Development Party
	Htin Kyaw	2016-	National League for Democracy

Source:(WORLD STATESMEN)⁸

Myanmar administrative divisions consist of 7 regions, 7 states and a union territory. Regions in Myanmar are Ayeyawady (Irrawaddy), Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Taninthayi and Yangon. States in Myanmar are Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and San. Then they also have union territory which is Nay Pyi Taw.

⁸ The table designed by the writer based on the data from WORLD STATESMEN. (n.d). *Myanmar*. Retrieved November 17, 2016, from World Statesmen: <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Myanmar.htm>

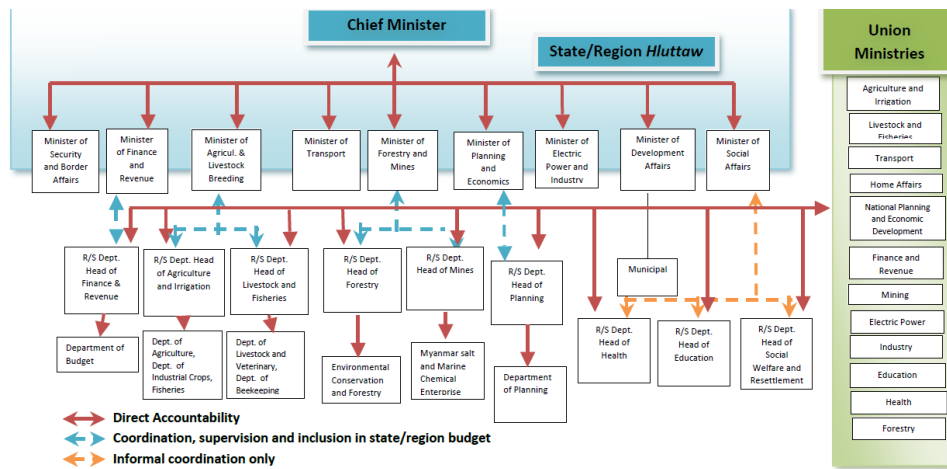


Figure 2.2: Government structure of Myanmar

Source: (Nixon, Joelene, Saw, Lynn, & Arnold)⁹

B. Profile of Rohingya

Rohingya is a Muslim group which came from middle-east countries and stayed in Arakan Kingdom now known as Rakhine state. The word Rohingya comes from “Rohang” which means *Arakan* and “Gya” which means *from*, so Rohingya means *from Arakan*. The population of Rohingya is around one million and most of them are Muslim. Rohingya people speak Bengali with Chittagonian dialect. The ancestors of Rohingya have mixed blood from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Bengali and Indi-Mongoloid.

According to UN data, Rohingya is the most persecuted minorities in the world. It was because they were un-recognized by the government of Myanmar since the independence of Myanmar. They were reputed as people of Bangladesh,

⁹ Nixon, H., Joelene, C., Saw, K. P., Lynn, T. A., & Arnold, M. (2013). *State and Regions Government in Myanmar*. MDRI-CESD.

not Myanmar because of their culture and language. Because of being unrecognized by the government, Rohingya is very risky to get discrimination from other majority group. Violence and unfairness almost happened there time to time. Rohingya people have been fleeing in the sea since 1970 because they cannot get citizenship and no countries can accept them from time to time.

Government of Myanmar issues the criteria of Myanmar society through 1982 citizenship law. In its law, they mention 3 types of societies that would be recognized by the government of Myanmar. They have full status which means the one who stayed in Myanmar as ancestor or before 1823 and are also included in 130 recognized ethnic groups in Myanmar. Second, Associate citizens are those who both are eligible and have applied for citizenship under a previous 1948 law. Last, naturalization is also resided before or in 1948.¹⁰ From those all categories, the government of Myanmar assume that Rohingya does not belong to them. Whereas Rohingya itself does believe that they were uncovered with the 1982 citizenship law or official legal status which was banned from them.

Rohingya has to face limitedness since staying in Myanmar, where they cannot access public facility freely as the other does. They lack sufficient access to livelihood opportunities such as medical care, so they should bribe to get the medical treatment. They cannot travel freely between one state to another. They are also prohibited to have more than two children which is one step to decrease population of Rohingya in Myanmar. Any access should be based on the permission first such as marriage. The children cannot go to school or get

¹⁰ UNHCR, *Loc. Cit.*

education. Those all things have been done by the government of Myanmar to treat Rohingya.

C. Historical Condition of Rohingya

Historically, Muslim Rohingya already stays in Arakan since 1400 under the kingdom of Mrauk U. They have been there as the employee of the kingdom, at that time under the governance of King Narameikhla or Min Saw Mun. Min Saw Mun is a Buddhist that really respected Muslim people.

Min Saw Mun has been deported for 24 years in Bengal, but then he was helped by the Sultan of Bengal who sent him back to Arakan as the King of Mrauk U Kingdom in north Arakan. This all because Kingdom of Mrauk U is still in the territory and under control by Kingdom of Bengal. Kingdom of Mrauk U used the government system similar to Kingdom of Bengal, which preferred Islamic system. Min Saw Mun brought a Muslim group from Bengal to work with him in Kingdom of Mrauk U. Even though Min Saw Mun is a Buddhist, he still followed the regulation and rule of Kingdom Bengal and worked with the Muslim people.

In 1785, Kingdom of Burma from south did the aggression in the territory of Arakan. They did the political discrimination towards Muslim in Arakan, and rebellion and violence were befalling the Muslim community there. The political discrimination continued until 1799 that caused around 35.000 people to move to Chittagong which at that time colonialized by British.

First British-Burma war (1824-1826) that was won by British was successful to bring back the Muslim group to stay in Arakan again. It was because after the victory of British, Arakan became one of the British territories. Then British sent back the Muslim people to north Arakan as well as their first place of work. Besides, it influenced the number of immigration from Bengal to Arakan that arose from time to time in 19th century. The processes of immigration occurred easily because there was no international border and they were in one territory under British colonialism.

In 1939 the war between Japan and British began to fight Arakan territory. Both countries had the same interest for territorial expansion and wanted to control Arakan territory. Japan was successful to defeat British and expelled them out from Arakan. The war was getting hotter that already involved religion and ethnic between Rakhine with Buddhist majority and Rohingya with Muslim majority. Two groups were created in this war which is Rohingya on behalf of British and Rakhine on behalf of Japan. British fully supported Rohingya by giving military support, because they actually had another interest that was to help ally in holding Arakan territory. The British's action triggered Japan's fury that was realized through persecution, murder and rape towards Rohingya people.

The tension between two groups became high and higher. It was shown in 1940 where Rohingya made cooperation with Pakistan under the government of Mohammad Ali Jinnah to help them free from Burma. However, this cooperation got negative response, while Pakistan did not want to do intervention with Burma's domestic matter. Rohingya effort has not finished yet, as in 1947 they

established Mujahid party which was kind of separation movement on behalf of Jihad to go out from Burma.

D. Rohingya's Condition after Myanmar Independence

Myanmar became an independent state in 1948 from British colonialism. The independence of Myanmar triggered Rohingya to be a separatist movement. People of Rohingya wanted to separate from Myanmar, because of their experience living with Myanmar. However the government of Myanmar declined it, so they did not want to give their land to Rohingya. The government declared that the land belonged to Myanmar and the people should go away from Myanmar.

The tension between government of Myanmar and Rohingya people remains from time to time. From the first government until now it is still in tension. The peak of that tension firstly in 1977 under the administration of Ne Win. Ne Win and his political party planned to dissolve Rohingya social and political organization, because of their mindset that says that the similarities of people of Rohingya prefer to Bangladesh than Myanmar. A lot of strategies were prepared from Ne Win and his political party.

Ne win has unwritten policy to withdraw some minorities ethnic in Myanmar such as Muslim, Christian, Karens and so on. Then, Ne Win national effort at that time is to register citizens and screen out foreigners prior to national

consensus.¹¹ It produced the constitution of emergent immigration in 1974 and Citizenship Law in 1982. Those constitutions explain about the criteria to be Myanmar citizen and also 135 ethnics in Myanmar that have been recognized. The constitution clearly explained that Rohingya does not belong to them or illegal based on the criteria that were explained there.

There is also Nagamin operation called “Dragon King” under Ne Win administration conducted by the Burmese immigration and military authorities. Dragon King Operation is the way the government of Myanmar withdraws unqualified people based on the constitution. This operation was held through discrimination towards Rohingya such as murder, rape, destruction of the building, mosque, house and many others.

Dragon King Operation was also successful to make the people of Rohingya afraid and feel unsafe. 200.000 people of Rohingya ran away from Rakhine to Bangladesh to save their life. This accident triggered world attention, especially United Nation which is the biggest international organization in the world. Through the negotiation, the United Nation attempted to mobilize the problem for successful mediation between Rohingya and Government of Myanmar. Government of Myanmar opens their hand to accept repatriation of Rohingya in Rakhine state.

The second high tension happened in 1992 by the Army of Myanmar. Rohingya, later designated refugees by the UNHCR, claimed rape, torture,

¹¹ Human Right Watch. (n.d.). *Historical Background*. Human Right Watch. Retrieved January 4, 2017, from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.html>

summary killing, confiscation & destruction of homes and property, destruction of mosque, physical abuses, religious persecution and forced labor.¹²

The discrimination by Army for this time caused 250.000 people of Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. Those refugees condition look worse than before, and they were being helped by some actors such as the government of Bangladesh and NGOs. They prepared 19 camps for the refugees in southeastern Bangladesh.

In the other side, the government of Bangladesh was afraid about their citizens who could not accept the Rohingya people for longtime. Then to cover up the problem, Bangladesh government decided to do negotiation about repatriation with Myanmar government through State Law and Order Restoration Council in Rangoon. UNHCR also helped the government of Bangladesh to send back home all the refugees. UNHCR tried to simplify the settlement of the Rohingya's problem, so they sent back all the refugees back to Rakhine and controlled them directly there. However, the UNHCR should face another problem, while the government of Myanmar declined their idea and would not give them permission to allow access to their region which means Rakhine.

Myanmar government closed their country to accept Rohingya people back. UNHCR and Bangladesh government faced various obstacles to send them back. After trying particular approach, lastly the government of Myanmar accepted the repatriation of those refugees with the condition before 15 August

¹² Center, R. I. (28 March 2001). *Bangladesh: Information on the situation of Rohingya Refugees*. United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. Retrieved December 18, 2016, from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3decbb113.html>

1997. Bangladesh government did not want to discard the chance, so that they sent back the refugees as many as possible per week.

Rohingya was once again had to face rude act by the government of Myanmar in 2001. This time the riot was organized by U Pinya Zyara, who was lately coming from Bangladesh. The riot affected the destroy of 28 mosques and Islamic schools in township of Maungdaw. A lot of people were killed and wounded, even the buildings were also burnt by them. Soldiers and Police had been there at the setting, but they were doing nothing to save the people or did what they should do as their obligation.

Rohingya people always looked for the way to live peacefully, so they tried to run and ask for help to neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. In 2009, Rohingya boat arrived in Southern Thailand, since that location was that easy to reach and the population in Southern Thailand is mostly Muslim. Thailand government suddenly decided to apply “push back” policy due to huge number of the refugees. Thailand government considered they could not control the refugees and would be impact to Thailand security matter. Last few years Thailand also had become a major transit country for the refugees to go to Malaysia.

Malaysia was also one of the targeted countries for the refugees beside Indonesia because of their population which believe in Islam. Then the Myanmar refugees will be easily accepted than other countries. Malaysia already accepted 120.000 migrants and they do not want to accept more. In the other side,

Indonesia just can hold them in certain time. Government of Indonesia cannot accept all of them to stay in Indonesia since they are in huge number and it would not be easy.

In 2012, UN sent their representative to do their mission in Myanmar. The mission was related to identify the root of problem and to solve the problem that was still going on until now. Mr. Ojea Quintana on behalf of UN went to Myanmar and did their mission. A day after Mr. Ojea Quintana finished his mission and went back to UN, the riot began again in Kyauktaw¹³.

In this time, the riot was not just between government and people of Rohingya but then it was between Buddhist and Muslim. Around 200 people were reported to have been killed and 140.000 people should be evacuated. Buddhist attacks Rohingya because Rohingya was being accused of rapping and killing a Buddhist woman. This encouraged Buddhist's fury, then the elites and a lot of Buddhists attacked Rohingya. Mosque, school, house and other buildings were destroyed by them. They attacked all Rohingya without thinking who their main target was. All they knew is just Muslim was trouble maker in their country and supposed to withdraw from Myanmar.

E. Rohingya Temporary Identity Card

Citizenship Law 1982 clearly explained that Rohingya did not belong to Myanmar, because they were not mentioned in the law as the other 135 ethnics

¹³ *Kyauktaw* is an area in Myanmar located 100 km northern capital city of Rakhine state, Sitwe.

were mentioned. It made Rohingya did not know where they should belong to. They were recognized as stateless nation even though they did not want to leave Rakhine that belongs to Myanmar territorial. In 1994 under pressure from international to make Rohingya status clear, government of Myanmar issued “white card”. White card was temporary identity card, which is absolutely just for temporary to know that there were Rohingya people who stayed in Rakhine.

Even though they had white card, they still did not find freedom. Everything was controlled by the government and they should act in a limit such as got services and facilities as citizen. White card permitted Rohingya to join the election, although just in some elections.

In mid-2016 under the administration of Thein Sein, the Immigration Ministry of Myanmar issued Green Card to replace White Card. Green card would be given to the people who returned the white card to the ministry of immigration. Green card holder had ability to apply for Myanmar citizenship and be verified for eligibility. Green card holder can stay in Myanmar as long as they want with the extension process every two years. They are also able to vote in Myanmar’s general election in November. For the green card holder who cannot produce relevant document as the citizen of Myanmar, it will be handled by Immigration office and advice by lawmaker how to handle the situation.

F. Islamophobia as the Supporting Factor

Islamophobia becomes a great issue in Myanmar. They really hate Muslim but they also have to live along with Rohingya people in one country. What happened in Myanmar in the past until now, shows the furriness of Buddhist towards Muslim. Not just the attack and riot that emerge in Myanmar, but some people also establish anti-Muslim movement. One of the sensational movements is 969 movement.

969 movement was an idea established by Ashin Wirathu. He is the prior of Masoeyin Mandalay, head of 60 monks and figure of 2500 people. Huge mass became the power of Ashin Wirathu to express his madness at Muslim people. He was ex-suspect of anti-Muslim case in 2003 and supposed to be in jail for 9 years. After being free from the prison, he went back to his town and developed Masoeyin Mandalay especially 969 movement.

Aishin Wirathu's existence increased in his emersion as the cover TIME magazine with the title "The Face of Buddhist terror" on 20 June 2013.¹⁴ He said "you can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog" and it is referring to Muslim. This shows that Islam and Buddha cannot stay together peacefully.

969 movement has objective to marginalize certain religion, now focusing on Islam. The movement emerged because they were afraid that Muslim will develop well than Buddha and they do not want Myanmar to become Muslim

¹⁴ Beech, H. (2013, July 1). Time Magazine. *The Face of Buddhist Terror*. Retrieved January 16, 2017.

country such as Indonesia. The emergence of 969 movement makes the riot become hotter than before.

To sum up, this chapter was discussing the origin of Rohingya people. Geographically, Myanmar and Bangladesh are neighbors and this opens the possibility of the people to cross one another. In kingdom era before, both countries got their independence and the relation between them was close to each other. This is shown by the historical notes that when the King of Arakan kingdom was in trouble, he decided to run for asking help in Bengal kingdom although they had different belief. The good relationship between both kingdoms brought them to their daily life to complement one another. This is the first time people of Rohingya which basically from Bengal came to Myanmar and worked in kingdom of Arakan. Apparently this made people of Myanmar did not like the Rohingya. The dislike of Myanmar people continued until now and involved all aspects. After the collapse of Arakan Kingdom, the independence of Myanmar made the dislike of Myanmar people to become more and more. The bad impact is after independence, the Rohingya people which have been there since long time ago was unrecognized by Myanmar and the discrimination began there because the people of Rohingya did not want to lose land of Arakan also. The conflict became wider until now.