

CHAPTER IV

THE DOMESTIC FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED THE GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS ROHINGYA REFUGEES

This chapter shows the domestic factors which forced Yingluck government in changing the policy towards Rohingya by allowing them stay temporarily in Thailand for six months. This chapter explains how situation influences and it has much pressure on changing the policy. It contains Islamic movement community in Thailand which is the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, Thai Muslim student movements, Members of the group Muslims for Peace and Muslims Rohingya in Thailand who were trying so hard to get involved the government decision. Furthermore, there are domestic NGOs, Human right movement groups who are also have much influence towards the government.

A. Islamic movement community in Thailand

A.1 Sheikhul Islam Office

Muslim Chief has cried during his visit to hundreds of Rohingya migrants, who were recently apprehended during the raids on hidden camps in the far South. Chularatchamontri Aziz Pitakkhumpol, the spiritual leader of Muslims in Thailand, on Wednesday, traveled to

Padang Besar checkpoint in Sadao District of Songkhla Province, where more than 300 Rohingya Muslims are being detained.¹ More than 800 Rohingya migrants have recently been found hidden in secret camps along the Thai-Malaysian border region. They are under detention at various state facilities in the southern border province. Mr. Aziz, accompanied by members of the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, the Songkhla Central Islamic Council and the Thai-Pakistani Friendship Association, also offered 300,000 baht in cash to be used for food, medicines and necessities needed by all detained Rohingya. While shedding his tears, the Muslim spiritual leader said that he would not want to see the Rohingya to be pushed back to Myanmar, where their fate will be still be quite harsh. He also pleaded for state collaboration with the third country, where the Rohingya wish to travel to.

A.2 Thai Muslim student movements

A group of Thai Muslim students staged a peaceful protest in front of government headquarters in Bangkok, while Prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra

¹ Thailand muslim chief pleads for help for rohingya. (2013, January 17). *Financial Post* , p. 1.

gave an official state welcome to Myanmar President Thein Sein, on a three-day official visit.²

Sarimachi Ashar, a young student in his fourth year of the Faculty of Political Science at Thammasat University and president of the Confederation Muslim students in Thailand, leading the little knot of protesters, said that the Rohingya are "treated as instigators of violence," rather than "victims ". He complains that the news of accidents in the Rakhine State of Myanmar have been "distorted" and "misleading" because they have overturned the facts. Students attending the event (a dozen in all), with signs and slogans including "Stop the massacre of Rohingya", also appealed to the Government of Myanmar to give better care to victims of violence and promote policies to protect minority groups.³

A.3 Members of the group Muslims for Peace and Muslims Rohingya in Thailand

About 300 people gathered in front of the Burmese embassy in Bangkok to demand justice for the Rohingya

² Kovidhavanij, W. (2013, January 20). *Muslim students protest violence against Rohingya*. Retrieved October 2014, 2014, from <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangkok>.

³ *ibid*

refugees and called on the regime to end the violence following an incident in Arakan (Rakhine) and asked the media to present both sides. They urged Bangladesh to open its borders to the Rohingya refugees entered.⁴

B. NGOs, Human right movement groups in Thailand :

The organizations that undersigned Thai Civil Society and Human Rights organizations:⁵

1. Thai Allied Committee for Desegregated Burma (TACDB- Foundation)
2. Peace for Burma
3. Action Network for Migrants (ANM)
4. Campaign Committee for Human Rights (CCHR)
5. Young People for Democracy Movement, Thailand (YPD)
6. Cross Cultural Foundation (CCF)
7. Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF)
8. Human Rights Lawyers Association
9. Lawyer Council of Thailand
10. Asian Institute for Human Rights (AIHR)

⁴ มุสลิมไทยร่วมเรียกร้องความเป็นธรรมให้โรฮิงยา. (2012, June 22). Retrieved October 20, 2014, from <http://www.muslim4peace.net/dp6/?q=node/2385>.

⁵ THAI ACTION COMMITTEE FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA. (2009). *Fact-finding*.

11. Burma Democratic Concern (BDC)

12. Union for Civil Liberty (UCL)

13. U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI),
Thailand

Those organizations above call upon the concerned Asian states in the region, especially India, Thailand and Indonesia, to:

- Stop all deportation of the boat people, including the Rohingya and non-Rohingya people as a necessary step for an international independent team to meet them and get a chance to establish the facts pertaining to their arrival, imprisonment, torture and abuse in Burma and Thailand as allegedly reported.

- Ensure that the boat people are provided full, neutral and independent legal access and are not deported until all verification about their allegations has been established.

- Allow the civil society groups, human rights groups, lawyers and humanitarian groups to have full and un-hindered access the boat people and to facilitate them in their psychosocial and physical needs along with necessary legal council to process their cases as per the rule of law.

- Establish independent legal counsel and invite civil society representative to presence with the boat people in Thailand, while there were having visitations undertaken by the various embassy officials for their verification. We believe that such situations will compromise the safety of boat people who might be placed under indirect or veiled threat or might fall

prey to the intrinsic legal manipulations in the absence of adequate knowledge of the local laws and its implications.

- We demand that the Government of Thailand also conduct a full scale independent inquiry into the ongoing suggestions of some corrupt officials engaged in trafficking activities.

According to the factors above as well as chapter III, due to those factors Yingluck government is under pressure. Even though, Thailand is not a party to the Refugee convention and protocol 1967. Indeed, it means Thailand doesn't need to pay attention on Rohingya or other refugees. Nevertheless, related to the pressure of any domestic as well as international NGOs, INGO, and also UNHCR, Thailand has to elevated its image by using the 'Humanitarian' which is giving hand to Rohingya refugees a temporary stay while they were in harsh condition. Related to the public policy itself, this chapter has answered how Yingluck government has to change the policy which is concerned to the international and domestic factors.

