



## CHAPTER 3

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# The Rohingya Crisis: Background on Myanmar, the Current Conflict, and Relevant Actors

**Abstract** The chapter delves into the history behind the Rohingya crisis, tracing its roots beyond the events of 2017. Although the Myanmar government established the year 1824 as the cut-off date for citizenship, historical evidence suggests that the term ‘Rohingya’ was used prior to this period, indicating the longstanding presence of this Muslim minority group in the region. Furthermore, the chapter sheds light on the multifaceted nature of the crisis, involving actors such as the state, the military, Buddhist monks, and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). Of particular significance is the unlikely alliance formed between ultranationalist Buddhists and the military, who were once adversaries but joined forces against the Rohingya population, leading to intensified violence and displacement. This historical context provides crucial insights into the complexities and underlying factors driving the ongoing Rohingya crisis.

**Keywords** History • Military • Ultranationalist Buddhists • ARSA • Ma Ba Tha

## INTRODUCTION

The origin of the 2017 forced displacement of the Rohingya into Bangladesh, while part of a long history of persecution, can be traced back to 2012, when violence erupted following rumours about the alleged rape

of a Buddhist woman by three Muslim Rohingya men. Subsequent years witnessed intermittent violence and hate speech against the Rohingya until the crisis reached its climax in August 2017. The complexity of the Rohingya crisis is linked to the historical development of Rohingya identity and their presence in Myanmar. While international organisations recognise the self-identification of the Rohingya, Myanmar consistently rejects the notion of Rohingya identity, instead branding them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. In contrast, the Rohingya assert that their historical presence in Myanmar dates back several centuries, when they arrived via sea routes as primarily traders, warriors, and saints. The roots of the crisis extend beyond the British colonial period, which impacted the Indian sub-continent, including Myanmar (then called Burma). However, the post-independence Burman state and its policies on indigeneity played a more pivotal role. Although British rule played a role in the creation of the crisis, the politics of the independent Burman state regarding indigeneity played a larger role. Of significance is the narrative that differentiated the Buddhist Burmese (us) from the Rohingya (them) and the rise of ultranationalist Buddhists. This chapter provides a succinct exploration of the historical backdrop to the ongoing Rohingya crisis. It further examines the multitude of actors involved in the conflict and elucidates the intricate complexities between the state, the military, and the monks in Myanmar.

### BACKGROUND TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Although there is not a consensus, it is generally accepted that the term ‘Rohingya’ is composed of *Rohang* (Arakan) and *Ga* or *Gya* (from), meaning that the Rohingya are people who originated from Arakan (now Rakhine State of Myanmar) (Albert & Maizland, 2020). However, the term is controversial. The people call themselves Rohingya and the ethnonym is widely used by the international community, including the United Nations, but the Myanmar government and the majority of the population of Myanmar consider them as illegal Bengali migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh (Kipgen, 2013, p. 300).

The current Rohingya crisis has its roots in the era of British rule when colonial census-takers first classified people according to ‘national’ and ‘tribal’ identities. When Burma gained independence, the Constitution of the Union of Burma (1948) granted citizenship to individuals born in Burma who had at least one grandparent of a ‘native race’ (*taing-yin-tha*) as well as those born and residing in British dominions for at least eight

years (Kyaw, 2019). However, the first citizenship law, the Union Citizenship Act of 1948, did not name the Rohingya as one of the country's 'native races' (Parashar & Alam, 2019), and the military regime's Citizenship Law of 1982 failed to recognise the Rohingya as an ethnic group with ties to Myanmar prior to 1824, when Arakan (Rakhine State) came under British occupation. This cut-off date for citizenship primarily resembles the dominant narrative inside Myanmar that 'Rohingya' is a recent term, primarily associated with migration from British colonial India. Yet, many sources indicate that 'Rohingya' existed even before that. For example, Francis Buchanan, an East India Company employee, wrote about Muslims '...who have been long settled in *Arakan*, and who call themselves *Rooingya*, or natives of *Arakan*' (Buchanan, 1799, p. 237). During Buchanan's travel to South East Bengal, he found that the Chakmas and Saks of the eighteenth century called Arakan as 'Roang' (Van Schendel, 1992, p. 104). Additionally, Qnungo (1988) wrote that the word Rohingya came to exist in different forms and spelling.

In 1983, the Myanmar national census increased the available ethnic categories from 3 to 135. However, 'Rohingya' was not mentioned in it; 'Bengali' was used instead. By choosing the 'Bengali' identity, the Rohingya were in effect rendered stateless (Berlie, 2008), enabling systematic repression and forced migration. The first mass forced migration of the Rohingya from Myanmar (then Burma) to Bangladesh took place in the late 1970s. Approximately 200,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh in 1978 when the military junta in Myanmar launched 'Operation Dragon King' as a way of "protecting" the sanctity of Buddhism from the "foreign outliers" who posed a "threat" (Akins, 2018). In 1979, most of the Rohingya refugees were forcibly repatriated back to Myanmar (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2002). The second mass forced migration occurred after the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in Myanmar failed to hand over power after the 'Multi-Party Democracy General Elections' in 1990. This provoked demonstrations by monks and students. The government felt it needed "a scapegoat, a distraction and common enemy" to unite a disillusioned and angry populace' (Alam, 2019, p. 13) and chose the Rohingya for two reasons. Firstly, the monks already despised the Rohingya, and secondly, there was pre-existing deep-rooted antagonistic sentiment by the majority Burmans against the Rohingya. Thus, distracting attention from the movement towards Rohingya was an effective strategy (Parashar & Alam, 2019). The result was that, in 1992, approximately 250,000 Rohingya took refuge in

Bangladesh when the SLORC increased its military presence and enacted compulsory labour, forced relocation, rape, executions, and torture on the Rohingya in northern Rakhine.

The most recent wave of violence against the Rohingya started in June 2012. On May 28, 2012, a Buddhist Rakhine woman was gang raped and murdered. The state media reported that the rapists were ‘Muslims’ and broadcasted different images of the murdered woman that went viral on social media (McCarthy & Menager, 2017). On May 29, three suspected Muslim men were arrested. In June, a crowd of some 300 Buddhist Arakanese stopped a Yangon-bound bus at Toungup township in Rakhine State. They took ten Muslim men off the bus and beat them to death. Following this incident, angry mobs from both Rakhine and Muslim communities went on the rampage, killing at least seven people, as per the official report (International Crisis Group, 2012). According to the state’s press release, the June riots resulted in the deaths of 88 people—31 Rakhines and 57 Rohingya. However, the Equal Rights Trust (ERT), an international human rights organisation, claims the actual number of Rohingya deaths to be at least 650, with 1200 missing (Kipgen, 2013). The June riots caused the displacement of 75,000 people, mostly Rohingya (UNHCR, 2013). Later that year, in October, a new round of violence broke out in Rakhine state. According to Physicians for Human Rights, a Rakhine merchant was killed by a mob in Mrauk U township on October 21 after selling rice to a Muslim customer. In this context, it’s crucial to emphasise that Buddhist monks have led a commercial boycott, presenting it as a religious obligation to incite widespread outrage against merchants deemed ‘greedy’ for trading with Muslims (The Economist, 2012). This portrayal of the boycott as a religious imperative serves to justify and garner backing for discriminatory measures against Rohingya Muslims, perpetuating cultural violence. Following October 21 mob violence, riots broke out in nine different townships for three days (Gittleman et al., 2013). According to Human Rights Watch, the October 2012 violence had been ‘one-sided and systematic’, and the attacks ‘were organized, incited, and committed by local Arakanese political party operatives, the Buddhist monkhood, and ordinary Arakanese, at times directly supported by state security forces’ (Human Rights Watch, 2013, p. 165; Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2013).

Several hundred men, women, and children were killed, and entire Muslim neighbourhoods and villages were razed, by the Arakanese population. Human rights organisations estimate that intercommunal violence

since mid-2012 displaced approximately 125,000 Rohingya and other Muslims and a smaller number of Arakanese people in Rakhine State (Human Rights Watch, 2013). However, of those arrested afterwards for committing violence during the June and October riots, the vast majority were Rohingya (849 out of a total 1121 arrests), and their charges were far more serious than those facing non-Muslim detainees. Other detainees also include Rakhine (233), and Hindu (27) (Gittleman et al., 2013, pp. 11–12).

The years following the 2012 conflict saw sporadic but significant incidences of violence against the Rohingya and other Muslims. For example, in 2013, several incidences of violence took place against Muslims throughout Myanmar, including the country's second largest city, Mandalay, and its former capital, Rangoon (Yangon). On February 18, several hundred monks and Buddhist nationalists attacked Muslim schools and businesses in Rangoon and, on February 20, 13 Rohingya women and girls were beaten and gang-raped by the Nasaka (the Burmese security force) (Gittleman et al., 2013). It is, therefore, evident that multiple actors are involved in the conflict from the Myanmar side.

From the side of the Rohingya, it was the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) who waged violence against the state security forces. *Harakah Al Yaqeen* (Faith Movement), currently known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), is the militant organisation of the Rohingya. ARSA has claimed in its Twitter account<sup>1</sup> that it is an ethno-nationalist movement 'fighting for liberation of persecuted Rohingya'. The conflict between the Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims escalated further following ARSA's claim of responsibility for assaults on the Myanmar border posts in Rakhine State in October 2016, resulting in the deaths of nine border officers, four soldiers, and 69 ARSA members (BBC, 2016a; BBC, 2016b; Slodkowski, 2016).

Intermittent fighting between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and ARSA continued throughout 2017. According to Myanmar government, ARSA killed around 44 Rohingya civilians and abducted 22 Rohingya in July in retaliatory strikes against individuals perceived as government collaborators by the ARSA members. However, ARSA refused the accusation (ASEAN Economist, 2017). On August 25, 2017, ARSA claimed responsibility for a series of coordinated attacks on more than 30 police and army posts (Head, 2017). The Suu Kyi government claimed that the attacks resulted in a death toll of 77 ARSA insurgents and 12 security force members in northern Maungdaw in Rakhine state (Aljazeera, 2017). On

September 24, 2017, Myanmar's military also accused ARSA of murdering 28 Hindus in the village of Ye Baw Kya in Rakhine State (AFP, 2017). The military destroyed hundreds of Rohingya villages and forced nearly 700,000 Rohingya to flee Myanmar for Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district. During August 25 and September 24, 2017 at least 6700 Rohingya were killed (Doctors without Borders, 2017).

Since the re-eruption of conflict and violence against the Rohingya in 2012, some authors (Cheesman, 2017; Kipgen, 2013; Parnini, 2013; Siddiquee, 2020; Thawngmung, 2016; Ware & Laoutides, 2018) have opined that the recent resurgence is the result of distrust and fear between the Rohingya Muslims and Myanmar Buddhists. Their animosity is based on four overarching factors: cultural differences, competition for land and resources, political mobilisation based on indigeneity by the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) and the National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD), and a political opening that created space for the expression of pent-up frustrations (Thawngmung, 2016, p. 528). Moreover, ultranationalists such as Ma Ba Tha have gained widespread grassroots support in the name of protecting the Buddhist people and their religion. However, the violence has had a particular gendered and racialised quality that can be included in a broader framework of far right populism in the age of posttruth politics and fake news. In the post-truth era, populists/nationalists do not use objective facts in shaping public opinion; rather, they appeal to emotion and personal belief. Thus, it would help to unveil the constructed sexist and racist features of the current crisis and how, in far-right populist discourse and practices, Muslim minority citizens are affected by gendered anti-Muslim racism (Vieten, 2016).

### ACTORS IN CONFLICT: THE ULTRANATIONALIST BUDDHISTS AND ARSA

With the end of military rule in 2011, Myanmar faced an enormous surge in ultra-Buddhist nationalists in the public sphere. Some of these well-known groups<sup>2</sup> include '969', Ma Ba Tha (Organisation for Protection of Race and Religion), Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation, Dhamma Wunthanu Rakhita, and various 'myo-chit'<sup>3</sup> youth groups. Their religious chauvinism is directed mainly against

Islam and Muslims. Some of their slogans, such as ‘Burma for the Burmans’ and ‘To be Burman is to be Buddhist’, represent their call to protect and promote Buddhism in Myanmar while excluding other religious minorities, such as Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. While sporadic mob violence and hate speech, particularly against the Muslim Rohingya, has been addressed in mainstream news, understanding the dynamics of the conflict requires a deeper scholarly understanding to better address the Rohingya crisis. This section explores the roles that two specific groups, ‘969’ and the Ma Ba Tha movement, have played in the Rohingya crisis. They are not the only movements that have promoted and reinforced far right populist sentiments, but the narratives and practices they promote provide clear evidence of a racial and gendered focus towards the protection of Buddhist and Buddhist women from Muslim men.

The ‘969’ movement is a nationwide popular Buddhist nationalist movement in Myanmar. As such, it intends to protect the Buddhist people and religion from Muslims. The name ‘969’ is a numerological reference to the three Jewels of Buddhism, based on the Buddhist *dhamma* (teachings of the Buddha). The first ‘9’ represents the nine noble attributes of Buddha, including *arabham* (holy), *samma-sambuddho* (self-enlightened), *vijjacarana-sampanno* (proficient in knowledge and conduct), *sugato* (sublime), *lokavidu* (knows all worlds), *anuttaro-purisa-dhammasarathi* (peerless charioteer to tame men), *sattha-deva-manussanam* (teacher of Gods and men), *buddho* (knows the Truth) and *bhagava* (glorious) (Nyunt, 1981). The number ‘6’ represents the attributes of the dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) and the last ‘9’ represents the attributes of the Buddhist sangha (the community of monks and nuns). The visibility of the movement increased when its apparent leader, a Buddhist monk named Ashin Wirathu, was jailed in 2001 for his involvement in the group and for engaging in hate crimes. The movement received wider attention upon Wirathu’s release from jail under the general amnesty for the political prisoner in 2012 (Thompson, 2013).

The Buddhist numerical reference was created to counter the Muslim numerical reference of ‘786’ (Schonthal & Walton, 2016). In South Asian Muslim culture, 786 represents *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim* (‘in the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful’). Across South Asia, many business enterprises and shops hang this symbol in front of their shops and

enterprises to mark them as Muslim, as a sign of blessing from Allah, and as a halal enterprise (Schonthal & Walton, 2016; van Klinken & Aung, 2017). It is evident from the Buddhist narratives, as one Buddhist woman relayed to the BBC, ‘we use the sticker [of 969] to show our respect and love for Buddhism and to show that we are Buddhist’.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Buddhist monks encouraged their people to use ‘969’ to counteract their neighbouring Muslim business enterprises so that Burmese shoppers buy from Buddhist businesses, not Muslim. ‘969’ was banned in 2014 because of its role in spreading hate speech and anti-Muslim propaganda. This did not curb the development of populist Buddhist sentiments, as the ‘969’ bans contributed to the subsequent rise of Ma Ba Tha.

The Organisation for the Protection of Race and Religion, popularly known as Ma Ba Tha, originated in 2014 and was led by the recently released political prisoner, Wirathu, who was already widely known for his involvement in anti-Muslim propaganda, hate speech, and riots. Ma Ba Tha has run Sunday schools and other community events, including social welfare provisions, which have become popular across Myanmar. Their aim is to protect Buddhism and regain the old Buddhist kingdom from the seventh century, which included present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. They blame Muslim conquerors for decimating the former glory of the Buddhist kingdom when they invaded the Buddhist kingdom and converted people into Islam. Ultranationalist Buddhists fear that the Rohingya will do the same to Myanmar. As a result, many monks consider Muslims to be an existential threat to Myanmar and Buddhism. The populist movements ‘969’ and Ma Ba Tha have been using different social media outlets to spread fear and hatred against the Muslim Rohingya, employing threat narratives that are gendered and racialised. The State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee—the country’s highest official Buddhist authority that regulates Buddhist clergy—banned Ma Ba Tha on May 23, 2017 because of its alleged role in violence against the Muslim Rohingya and the spread of hate speech and other defamatory propaganda. However, Ma Ba Tha re-emerged with a different name, the ‘Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation’, which replicates the former’s organisational structure and activities (Myanmar Times, 2017).

The situation in Myanmar is complex and does not consist solely of populist or nationalist movements dominated by one narrative. On the opposite side of the spectrum is the Rohingya ultranationalist organisation—the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). ARSA is the only organisation representing the Rohingya that is fighting for the rights of



Rohingya Muslims within a nationalist and populist narrative. ARSA was created by a group of 20 people from the Rohingya diaspora in Saudi Arabia during 2013 or 2014 as a result of the violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar in 2012. Its aim is to promote and protect the rights of the Rohingya and to ensure their rights to full citizenship status. In one of its Twitter messages, ARSA claims that it ‘only legitimately and objectively operates as an ethno-nationalist movement within its ancestral homeland (Arakan) in Burma’.<sup>5</sup> However, ultra-Buddhist nationalists, ordinary Burmese, and many news media outlets tend to consider it an Islamist militant organisation that is waging jihad. Thus, they claim that ARSA is a security threat not only to Buddhism but also to the country. However, Fair (2018) argues that ‘while many in the “Islamist terrorism” industry have been quick to paint ARSA with the jihadi brush, I am sceptical of ARSA’s Islamist bona fides. ARSA has assiduously rejected Islamist appeals’. Moreover, ARSA does not possess modern weapons to carry out massive and large-scale attacks; in their previous attacks on Myanmar police posts, they used bamboo sticks and homemade bombs. The Myanmar government has banned this militant organisation.

There is a widespread belief by the Myanmar authorities and the Buddhist population generally that the general Rohingya population is actively participating in ARSA and its arms struggle. This assumption was not borne out during the interviews conducted for this book. Likewise, Amnesty International believes that ARSA mobilises many, but not all, Rohingya villagers. Of my Rohingya interviewees, only two of the respondents said that they had heard anything about ARSA, but they did not know who actually engaged in fighting against the Buddhist Burmese. One of the informants, who is also one of the Majhis<sup>6</sup> in the Rohingya camp, told me that the Buddhist Rakhine believe that all Rohingya youth belong to ARSA (Interview: 2018MRMM1). When I asked him about ARSA’s attacks on the military check posts in recent years, he claimed these all are fake news. He said, ‘we could not even keep a *dao* (a traditional weapon for chopping) at home without their [the authorities’] permission; how could ARSA have a weapon to attack the Magh?’<sup>7</sup>

This respondent contradicted ARSA’s self-portrait as an armed militant group in its official Twitter site<sup>8</sup> and in its official publication from 2019 entitled ‘Reviving the Courageous Heart: A Report by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army’.<sup>9</sup> However, ARSA was evidently armed when it attacked a Hindu community in Rakhine state in August 2017. As Amnesty International claims, ARSA ‘is responsible for at least one, and potentially

a second, massacre of up to 99 Hindu women, men, and children as well as additional unlawful killings and abductions of Hindu villagers' (Amnesty International, 2018). Moreover, ARSA was also responsible for forcefully converting Hindu women to Islam and later marrying them. During my interview with a Hindu Rohingya man living in the Rohingya camps, he told me, 'We are more fearful of ARSA than the Burmese military'. When I asked why, he replied, 'We fled to Bangladesh to escape from the torture from ARSA' (Interview: 2018HRM2).

### THE STATE, THE MILITARY AND THE MONKS: A COMPLEX INTERPLAY

To understand the Rohingya crisis, it is important to unpack the complex relationship between the state, the military, and the monks. Although Myanmar has returned to democracy after a long period of authoritarian rule, it is nevertheless backed by the military and thus could be called a 'quasidemocracy'. At first glance, it might not be entirely clear how Buddhist monks are involved in this scenario, but there are several examples of their interrelatedness. For example, in a gathering of thousands of people in Yangon, the radical monk Ashin Wirathu praised the military establishment for its role in the Rohingya genocide. In one rally, he claimed that military-linked lawmakers deserved to be glorified like Buddha and that 'only the military ... protects both our country and our religion', while in another rally in October 2018, he condemned the decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to pursue a case against Myanmar's military for its persecution of the Rohingya (Beech, 2019).

The monks and the military have not always had a comfortable relationship and, indeed, when examining the history of military rule in Myanmar since 1948, the relationship has been highly contentious. For example, many monks were arrested and detained for their involvement in the 'Saffron revolution' of 2007. The Saffron revolution was led by the monks to protest against the military dictatorship and the consequent political and economic crisis (i.e., price hikes). The revolution ended due to the military junta's crackdown on the protesters. However, this relationship changed with the advent of democratic governance. The opening of Myanmar in 2011 and its transition to democracy fostered a new alliance between the monks, the military, and the state based on a Buddhist nationalist narrative. The then-president, Thein Sein, openly supported

ultranationalist monks. He declared Wirathu to be a son of Lord Buddha who is spreading a message of peace and love. When, in 2013, *Time* magazine called Ashin Wirathu ‘The face of Buddhist terror’ and the ‘Buddhist Bin Laden’,<sup>10</sup> President Thein Sien gave a statement in his official website that claimed the *Time* magazine report had ‘undermined efforts to rebuild trust between faiths and that the monk’s order was striving for peace and prosperity’. Thien Sien further claimed that magazine article’s characterisation of Buddhists would create ‘a misunderstanding of Buddhism, which has existed for thousands of years and is the religion of the majority of our citizens’ (BBC, 2013, para 3&5).

Wirathu, who has been instrumental in leading the Buddhist nationalist movements either through ‘969’ or through Ma Ba Tha, has powerful connections with the top level of the military. He has had strong support from San Sint, a former lieutenant general in the military regime and the Minister of Religious Affairs for the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), who has vowed 969’s propagation as messages of peace (Routray, 2014). Wirathu’s connections include other significant military leaders, for example, General Ne Win (Head of State, 1962–1981) and Than Shwe (the junta leader during 1992–2011), who was responsible for the murder of hundreds of monks during the Saffron Revolution (Coclanis, 2013). These are military actors who had a role in the previous authoritarian rule and have continued under the democracy that was forged in 2011. This mix of actors—the state, the military, and ultranationalist monks—reached a consensus over the Burmese identity to determine who should and should not belong to the Burmese polity. Wade (2017) explained how the contestation over an ethnic minority’s identity was jointly manipulated by Buddhist extremists and the oppressive military government in Myanmar to construct the Rohingya as ‘others’ who were, consequently, a threat to Buddhism and Myanmar. This allowed them to justify the forcible removal of Rohingya from the Rakhine State.

These three groups of actors have actively used various tactics to popularise anti-Muslim and pro-Buddhist propaganda among the general population, using different social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Facebook, in particular, played a distinct role in igniting the conflict. As Milmo (2021, para 8) mentioned, ‘Facebook admitted in 2018 that it had not done enough to prevent the incitement of violence and hate speech against the Rohingya, the Muslim minority in Myanmar ... “Facebook has become a means for those seeking to spread hate and cause harm, and posts have been linked to offline violence”’.

## CONCLUSION

The protracted Rohingya crisis is characterised by intricate dynamics surrounding self-identity (as Rohingya) and ascribed identity (as illegal Bengali), and the consequent denial of citizenship for the Rohingya. This denial created conflict, tension, and violence that resulted in the forced displacement of many Rohingya from Myanmar. The Rohingya became victims of arbitrary violence, such as the burning of houses and properties. The main perpetrators of the violence were the military and ultranationalist Buddhist entities of Myanmar. The Buddhist monks, previous enemies of the military establishment due to Saffron Revolution of 2007, become allies against a common enemy, the Rohingya. Ordinary Rohingya civilians were the main victims of such violence. From the Rohingya side, a militant Rohingya organisation named ARSA was also involved in violence through attacking Myanmar security forces bases. However, the trajectory of recent violence against the Rohingya has been predominantly unidirectional, with eruptions commencing in 2012 and resurging in subsequent years until reaching a climax in 2017. Since August 25, 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar in a bid to preserve their lives, seeking refuge in Bangladesh. Between 2012 and 2017, the predominant manifestations of violence included various forms of direct violence, such as murder, killings, mob violence, and sexual violence, including instances of rape. The Rohingya community has also been subjected to structural violence, encompassing discrimination, pervasive poverty, constrained access to resources, limitations on property rights, educational constraints, and restricted mobility. However, the historical backdrop of antagonism has deep roots, tracing back to the British mobilisation of labour in Myanmar during their rule from 1885 to 1948. The issue became particularly acute following Myanmar's independence in 1948. Over the years, multifaceted processes have contributed to the predicament of the Rohingya. In the chapter that follows, I focus on the multidimensional vulnerabilities and violence against the Rohingya over the years, particularly during the period 2012–2017, with a focus on the gendered nature of the violence.

## NOTES

1. See detail about ARSA's different posts and claims at [https://twitter.com/ARSA\\_Official](https://twitter.com/ARSA_Official)
2. For a detail discussion on Ma Ba Tha see, International Crisis Group, 'Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar', *Asia Report no.290*, Brussels: ICG, 5 Sept. 2017).
3. Meaning 'nationalist', or literally 'love for one's own race'.
4. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSihfWY41So>
5. See [https://twitter.com/ARSA\\_Official/status/1149990453355225088](https://twitter.com/ARSA_Official/status/1149990453355225088)
6. A majhi is a Rohingya leader who is in charge of a block in the Rohingya camps. It is part of the 'Majhi System' introduced by the Bangladeshi government for better governance of the Rohingya refugees.
7. *Magh* are the Arakanese people from Myanmar and in Bangladesh the Arakanese used be called *Magh* pirates. They were involved in plundering along the coast of Chittagong and in the rivers of Bengal. They also captured many Bengalis and sold them in the slave markets run by the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth century.
8. See the ARSA official Twitter site, [https://twitter.com/arsa\\_official?lang=en](https://twitter.com/arsa_official?lang=en)
9. See the video made by ARSA entitled 'Reviving the Courageous Hearts' at [https://issuu.com/arsapublisher/docs/report\\_1\\_final\\_2](https://issuu.com/arsapublisher/docs/report_1_final_2), access on 07.07.2020
10. See the *Time* magazine vol. 182, no. 1 that made a front-cover page entitled 'The Face of Buddhist Terror', 1 July 2013.

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