

# ON THE EDGE: Vulnerabilities of Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia



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## **Research Team**

Dr Mohd Al Adib Samuri  
Faculty of Islamic Studies & Institute of Islam Hadhari  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Badrul Hisham Ismail  
Nadia Lukman  
Daryl Loh  
Farah Hanip

## **Field Research**

Tadzarul Adha  
Nur Farhana Che Awang  
Sabrina Idlilfitri



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Produced by IMAN Research BHD.  
515, LG-1A, Bangsar Village 1,  
Jalan Telawi 1, 59100 Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia.  
Email: [admin@imanresearch.com](mailto:admin@imanresearch.com)

Website: [www.imanresearch.com](http://www.imanresearch.com)



Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, IMAN Research (IMAN) is a think tank which focuses on security and socio-political matters. We concentrate in the domains of peace and security, as well as areas of sustainable development and governance. Malaysia is ideally situated in the Southeast Asian region, right in the middle of Asian Tigers such as Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and with neighbours like Japan and China. Its ecosystem allows us to test out solutions between orthodoxy and modernity, as well as indigenous and immigrant populations. We aim to deliver sound policy solutions along with implementable action plans with measurable outcomes. To date, we have worked with Malaysian and foreign governments as well as the private sectors and international bodies, such as Google, UNICEF, UNDP and USAID, on issues ranging from security, elections to civil society empowerment.

IMAN is spearheaded by experts with extensive local and international experience in the areas of management consultancy, social policy development, community resilience and engagement, particularly in the area of security, electoral reform, participatory urban redevelopment and psycho-social intervention within communities in conflict. We are competent in cross-cultural engagement and as an organization, we place a high value on inclusivity, diversity and indigenous knowledge.

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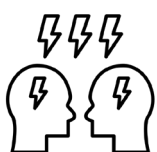
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IMAN Research (IMAN) embarked on a research and capacity building project to examine the risk of radicalisation and propensity towards violent extremism among vulnerable communities, particularly Rohingya refugees in Malaysia in 2019. This project was conducted qualitatively via the following methods: shadowing the community and documenting observations, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews with Rohingya refugee communities in four regions: Northern, Central, Southern and East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Sabah and Sarawak were excluded from the research due to accessibility and no data on the Rohingya refugee population in the region.

The research revealed four key themes in the risk of radicalisation among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, which are:



### **(1) Refugee vulnerability**

The pre and post migration difficulties faced by Rohingya refugees are part of the contributing factors that hinder the resiliency of the community against violent extremism. On top of past discrimination and persecution back in Myanmar, the community finds it difficult to sustain their livelihood in Malaysia due to barriers in accessing basic services as well as job opportunities.



### **(2) Psychological distress and intense emotional reflections**

The community showed signs of psychological distress and intense emotional reflections from their pre and post migration experience. Emotions such as anger and frustration, disappointment, alienation and distrust were shared by the community members. Difficulties in accessing healthcare services also means that these communities are unable to access mental healthcare services for intervention.



### **(3) Thoughts on violence**

Rohingya refugees perceived the Myanmar army as enemy numero uno for persecuting the community back in Myanmar. As such, the disappointment and anger in the mentioned key themes above led to the justification of violence to fight against their oppressor, the Myanmar army. Some frame this intention as a jihad against tyranny and some see it with the intention to fight for their rights since the international community has failed them.

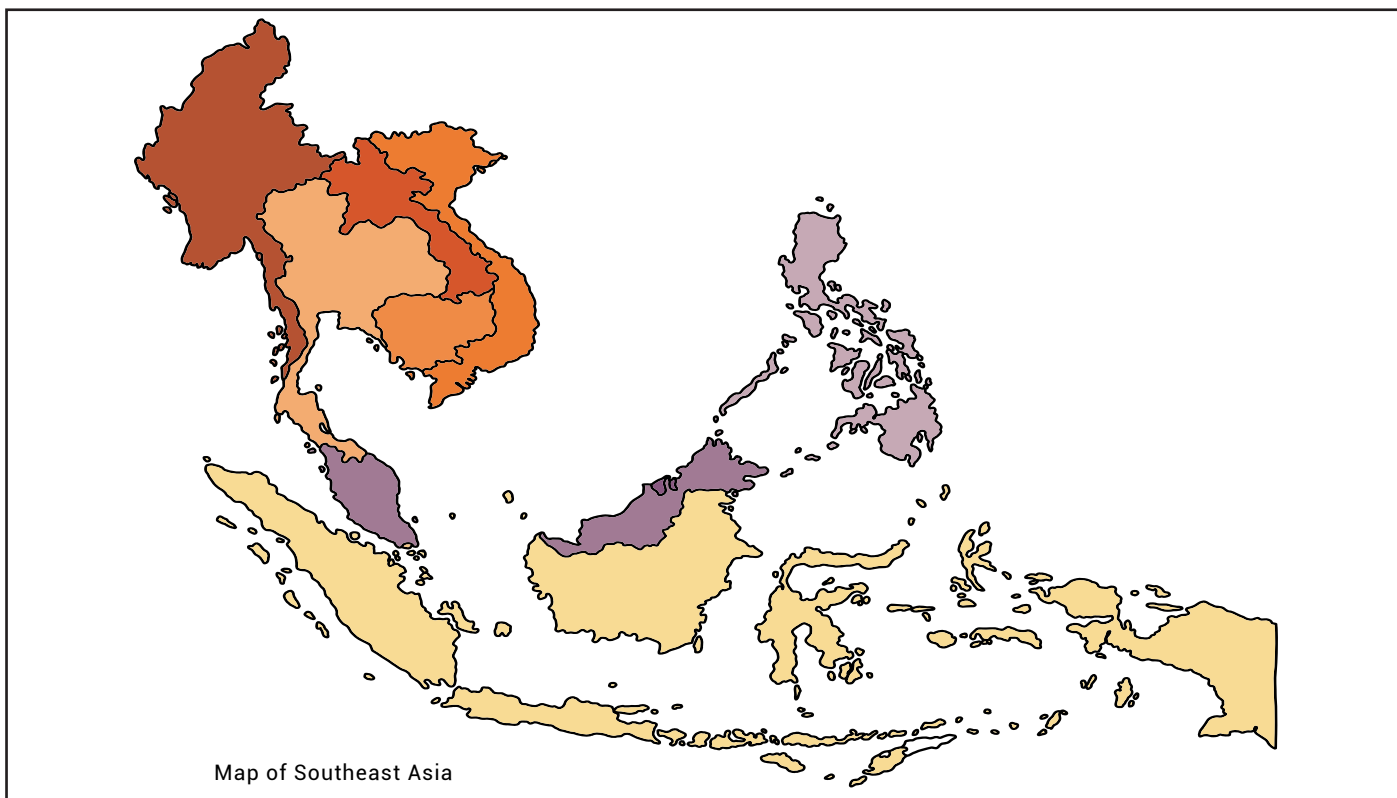


### **(4) Rohingya networks**

Due to the migratory nature of the Rohingya refugees, the communities in Malaysia have networks with Rohingya refugees in other countries such as Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Myanmar. In terms of the community network in Malaysia, apart from people of their own community, neighbours and employers from Malaysian local communities help them in terms of living quarters and job opportunities.

IMAN has engaged with various organisations such as IKRAM, ICRC, UNDP, Penang Institute and IDEAS for their thoughts as well as further recommendations that can be considered. IMAN has also engaged with other civil society organisations for trauma healing programs for the Rohingya refugee communities. We hope this study further enlightened the need for a Refugee Policy that protects the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA REFUGEE LANDSCAPE: AN OVERVIEW



The migration of people within Southeast Asia is not a new phenomenon. Based on early scholarly work on migration in Southeast Asia, especially during the earliest periods of Malaysian history (Gungwu, 1985), many have roots from other countries. The diaspora was due to trade, intermarriages and so forth. Forced migration on the other hand is something more recent, with the crossing of national and imperial borders in Southeast Asia since the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) and the ensuing period of decolonisation (Abraham, 2019). These border crossings have taken place either on land or by sea and many forcibly displaced people have been assimilated into border communities and become accepted as legal residents with the passage of time but this practices began to change especially since the Indochina wars and subsequent refugee crisis. Observers noted that pushback against refugees and asylum seekers in Southeast Asia is due to the multiple military, political and humanitarian crises that happened in the 1970s; i.e. the fall of Cambodian monarchy, reunification of Vietnam, etc.

The history of refugees in modern Southeast Asian countries is mostly traced to the armed conflicts in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos with heavy military intervention by the United States between the 1950s until officially ending in 1975. The wars affected the whole region and created the Indochina refugee crisis

that lasted until the 1990s. The Indochina refugee crisis saw 3 million people take dangerous and treacherous journeys to become refugees in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries and Hong Kong before being relocated to a third country. According to the Canadian Red Cross, by 1975, 250,000 Vietnamese had perished at sea undertaking such journeys. Yet, until today, with the exception of Cambodia, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste, no other Southeast Asian country has acceded to the United Nations' 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol mandated the UNHCR to coordinate three durable solutions for refugees: local integration in a host country, voluntary return to the refugee's country of origin, or permanent cross-border resettlement in a third country. In lieu of signing up for this international framework, individual Southeast Asian countries have recently developed their own refugee policies, often in reaction to emergencies such as violence in the neighbouring countries or natural disasters. For example, Indonesia passed regulations in 2010 and 2016 permitting the IOM to establish a community housing system and monitor asylum seekers and Thailand's cabinet approved the establishment of a screening mechanism to distinguish people who need international protection from economic migrants in 2019.

1 Wang Gungwu (1985). Migration Patterns in History: Malaysia and The Region. *Journal of The Malaysian Branch of The Royal Asiatic Society*, 58  
2 <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/12/19/the-long-read-host-communities-and-refugees-in-southeast-asia-a-workshop-report/>  
3 <https://www.redcross.ca/history/artifacts/vietnamese-refugees-documents-of-response>

### Malaysia's Response to the Growing Number of Refugee

Malaysia received its first influx of refugees in May 1975 – known as the Vietnamese boat people due to them fleeing using boats. With the assistance of UNHCR, the first refugee camp was set up at Pulau Bidong in 1978, a small uninhabited island off the coast of Terengganu, situated on the east coast of the peninsular. It housed thousands of refugees at a time before it was relocated to Sungai Besi in 1991, which is around 20 kilometres outside of Kuala Lumpur. The camps were finally closed down in 1996, and in total, Malaysia had sheltered 250,000 Vietnamese refugees over the course of 20 years.

Official numbers state that as of September 2021 that there are 179,510 refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, an increase of 50,000 refugees from 129,095 in 2019. This number does not include asylum seekers who have not or are unable to register with UNHCR from South Asia, Middle East etc, all fleeing persecution, and we do not know the number of those residing even after failing to register.

Despite this, Malaysia is still not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and thus lacks a legal framework to guarantee the rights of

refugees. The UNHCR card issued to refugees in Malaysia is merely a card stating that the holder is a UNHCR protected individual, it has no legal basis and does not serve to protect. Since there is no framework or specific policy in place to protect refugees in Malaysia, refugees in Malaysia are exposed, and vulnerable to exploitation. They do not have access to government schools, while they have access to healthcare facilities but at unaffordable foreign national prices and with no access to insurance, healthcare is deemed a luxury. To add, they have limited mobility and access to legal work.

Interestingly enough, in 1994 during the height of the Balkan wars, Malaysia offered asylum to 350 Bosnia Muslim refugees fleeing Yugoslavia. They were provided with education scholarship from basic education to university, basic housing, and permission to work in Malaysia (Ahmad, Rahim and Mohamed, 2016). This is most unusual and the acceptance of Bosnian refugees sparked debate. A similar case also occurred to a limited number of Syrian refugees fleeing the Syrian war, they were granted emergency documents, work or student visas to live in Malaysia. In 2017, Malaysia piloted a refugee work scheme programme but there has been no updates on the programme ever since the pilot.



The Vulnerables

<sup>4</sup> Malaysia: refugee population 2020 | Statista

<sup>5</sup> Malaysia | International Organization for Migration (iom.int)

<sup>6</sup> Source from The Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia by Ahmad, Rahim and Mohamed

<sup>7</sup> Malaysia in pilot scheme to allow Rohingya refugees to work | Reuters

## **REGIONAL IMPLICATION OF THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES CRISIS**

In November 2019, the Republic of The Gambia filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar, alleging that their treatment of the Rohingya community violated provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. On January 23rd, 2020, the ICJ ruled that the Myanmar government was to cease all alleged genocidal acts against the Rohingya and to preserve any evidence (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In March 2022, the United States government had also declared the repression occurring onto Rohingya by the Myanmar government as genocide, amounting to ethnic cleansing. This latest development bears great significance as it is the first legal act to call the violence committed against the Rohingya a crime against humanity.

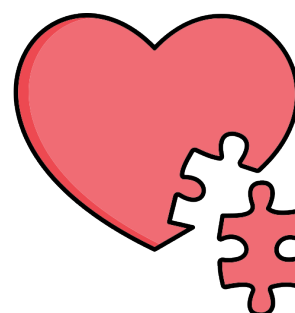
The Myanmar military junta's genocidal acts against Rohingya ethnic groups started in the 1970s, though the crisis reached a new peak in 2017. At least 6,700 Rohingya, including 730 children at the age of five died in 2017 due to violence involving Buddhist mobs and Myanmar military. Targeted violence against Rohingya ethnic also involves rape and the destruction of properties and villages. Rohingya ethnic groups who are still in Myanmar are subjected to strict movement control, either confined in camps or villages which limits their access to education, food, healthcare and livelihoods.

The recent military coup has exacerbated the situation not only for the Rohingyas but the overall population of Myanmar. Following the National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi big win in the 2020 general election, a military coup was conducted in February 2021, overturning the results. These events were then followed by nationwide protests against the military with an estimated 800 people killed during the protest. Aung San Suu Kyi was then arrested by the military and faced various charges such as corruption, incitement, violating Official Secrets Act and breaching COVID-19 rules. Aung San Suu Kyi is now moved to prison awaiting trials in Myanmar.

By the end of 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2019) reported that 1.1 million refugees had fled Myanmar into neighbouring states including Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia. In Malaysia, ethnic Rohingya constitute 55.6% of the country's overall refugee population (UNHCR, 2019). By breakdown, 103,030 are Rohingyas, 22,470 are Chins and the remaining 29,370 are other ethnic groups (UNHCR, 2021).

### **Impact on Malaysia**

Due to Malaysia's lack of refugee asylum policy as well as not being party to the refugee convention, Malaysia is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and thus lacks a legal framework to guarantee the rights of refugees. The Rohingyas as well as other refugees are in a precarious situation. As the refugees do not receive financial support from UNHCR and have no legal right to work, they usually perform 3D (dirty, dangerous, difficult) jobs to earn a livelihood. The younger generations are also affected as they lack access to education, specifically education that can offer academic credentials. Due to their status as refugees, the cost of medical health services at local government hospitals or clinics for a refugee is the same rate as other foreigners. Even with UNHCR bearing 50% of the treatment cost, it is still relatively high. Rohingya refugees in Malaysia are vulnerable, alienated and unable to integrate with Malaysian society and are at-risk to violence and exploitation.



<sup>8</sup> Human rights treaty adopted by General Assembly of the United Nations on 9th of December 1948 which put in details on action that qualifies as genocide and punishable according to law.

<sup>9</sup> Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis - BBC News

<sup>10</sup> Rohingya | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

<sup>11</sup> Former Myanmar Leader Aung San Suu Kyi Sent to Solitary Confinement: Report (news18.com)

## ARE REFUGEES MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO BEING INFLUENCED IN FAVOUR OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

### What is Violent Extremism?

There is currently no valid or reliable measurement for risk for violent extremism that exists. Neither is there a single profile or set of risk factors that can accurately determine who is most at risk for engaging in violent extremist acts.

However, there is ongoing debate on the process of radicalisation — the process by which an individual becomes an extremist and whether it involves the adoption of extreme political, social or religious beliefs and not necessarily engagement in violence, or adoption of "... beliefs that not only justify violence but compel it, and how they progress — or not — from thinking to action" (Borum 2011, 8). Borum argues that radicalization into violent extremism (RVE) does not require an ideological component as a prerequisite for involvement in VE.

Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism proposes a model for understanding the radicalization process, where people ascend the floors as their commitment to VE increases. According to this, most people are on the ground floor as they experience relative deprivation and perceive some form of injustice. They may climb to the first floor for solutions, but those who do not find any continue to climb higher; with each floor, their perceived options decrease until there is only one solution left. From Moghaddam's model, the population shrinks with increased commitment to VE.

Efforts to identify individuals susceptible to RVE should rely on risk factors rather than profiles, as it accounts for the intersection of individual and environmental factors. Individuals engaged in terrorism or VE have been found to share commonalities and these risk factors present a useful framework for understanding how an individual can be socialized into terrorism or VE (Horgan 2008; Silke 2003). Grievance-based issues such as social identification, marginalisation and perceived injustice serve as push factors, whereas pull factors are incentives or rewards from involvement in VE.

### Social Identification

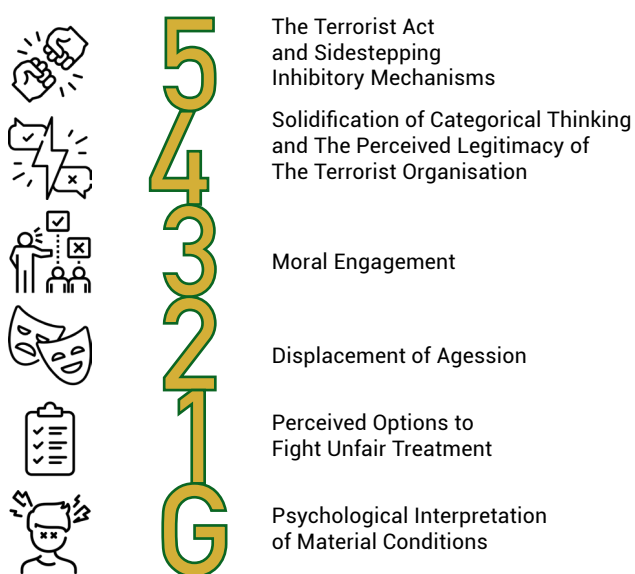
Individuals tend to be connected to a situation either through direct exposure by personally experiencing it, or indirect means such as sharing the sentiments or empathising with the victims (Horgan 2008; Silke 2003). The connection to the group or cause can serve as a driving factor to right the wrong, by giving individuals an identity through their identification with a cause or group. Identity is suggested to be at the core of radicalisation, with the success of a deradicalisation programme being highly dependent on its ability to provide a distinctive identity to a radical-to-be (Al Raffie, 2013).

### Marginalisation and Alienation

Marginalization occur due to multiple reasons such as discrimination or systemic barriers. Depending on the severity, it can also push individuals outside of mainstream society and towards the fringes, rendering them vulnerable to VE groups. Marginalisation encompasses social, political and economic treatment that affects the livelihood of groups that experience marginalisation. As such, groups that are marginalised may have the risk of being alienated from the rest of society.

### Perceived Injustice

Perceived injustice or humiliation can cause anger and resentment to accumulate, and victims may assign blame to the party they perceive as responsible for inflicting the situation upon them. In line with this, a desire for vengeance or "... the infliction of harm in return for perceived injury or insult" (Silke 2003, 40) can lead to the justification of extreme violence as a viable or necessary response. Argomaniz and Lynch (2018) posit that a moral justification for aggression is needed to overcome the moral impediments to violence, reflected in the concept of self-help or taking the law into one's hands. Violent radicals tend to see the use of violence as necessary, as well as a provoked reaction - thus implying it is a last resort (Taylor and Quayle, 2004; Horgan, 2008).



Moghaddam Staircase to Terrorism

The presence of these factors does not mean the individuals are terrorists. In fact, they may require additional support or stimulus to be radicalised into violent extremism, which is usually provided by VE groups. For example, VE groups provide their own narratives which entail a specific interpretation of the situation, the problems and methods to remedy it (Silke 2003). Thus, VE groups capitalise on grievances and frustrations of at-risk individuals, channelling it towards their cause.

### Refugees and Violent Extremism

In general, based on existing literature, refugees are victims of violent extremism happening in the home country they are fleeing away from. While there has been no conclusive evidence to prove the connection between refugees migration to violent extremism in host countries, indeed refugee communities can be a target for religious radicalisation and terrorist recruitment (Antunez, 2019). However, there are few factors that need to be considered as we discuss on refugee radicalisation towards violent extremism: social environment, problems of identity, discrimination, economic conditions, cultural marginalisation and influence of the country of origin (Gafarova, 2018). Therefore, it is important for the host country to implement a migration policy that addresses integration, social and economic environment of refugees to prevent violent extremism.

Based on a 2016 study on "...understanding pathways to and away from violent radicalisation among resettled Somali Refugees..." (Ellis, 2016), overall Somali immigrants and refugees engage constructively in civic and political life of their countries of resettlements (US and Canada) and are far more likely to reject violent ideas and actions than to endorse them. There is also a great deal of diversity within the Somali community, and no single set of beliefs or behaviours describe those who are most open to violent extremism. This study shows the importance of integration policies and mechanisms for migrant and refugee communities in host countries to prevent violent extremism.

Experiences of interactions with police provides in-depth analysis of how formal institutions promote or hinder a sense of belonging and connection to one's country of resettlement. Implications of widespread negative interactions (or perceptions thereof) are manifold. Negative experiences of interactions with police may undermine efforts to build immigrant-police partnerships at a time when they are especially critical, for example, experiences of unfair treatment at the hands of police, and understood this injustice to be the result of a variety of reasons related to their identity, including race, immigrant status, and

Muslim religion. The type of unfair treatment youth reported ranged from stereotyping to acts of outright physical abuse. In addition, some youth described instances where they sought help but were turned away; taken together, these actions have the potential to greatly undermine police-community relations and to create an adversarial relationship between Somali immigrants/refugees and law enforcement.

Other host countries such as Canada have difficulties in balancing security issues while receiving refugees into their country. While asylum policy in Canada provides work and healthcare access as soon as refugees arrive in Canada, upon the exposure of security risk brought upon the refugees, it is not easy to deport them without going through the justice system. Even when deportation permission was granted, the refugees went into hiding, avoiding security enforcement detection. As of 2004, 36,000 individuals including criminals and people with security risks were supposed to be deported but had disappeared (Sole, 2015). This is part of the dilemma in designing asylum/refugee policy in many countries.

### The Targeting of Refugee Youths by Violent Organisations

Refugees are essentially migrants who flee across the border to other countries, to avoid persecution they experience in their homeland. One of the main differences between refugees and regular migrants is the relationship both of these groups have with their homeland. The former group will often experience trauma and have difficulties in maintaining their ties to their homeland. The latter have no problem whatsoever in maintaining their ties to homeland as they hold identity verification documents or are able to access any services provided by the home government towards the migrant. Relationships with the host country for both groups also might differ. Though there are several international organisations and protocols to administer refugees such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and UNHCR, it is up to the host country government to decide the rights and limitations owned by refugees in the host country.

The traumatic experiences, injustice and alienation experienced by the refugees are among the risk factors for refugees to be recruited into violent extremism. While these risks do not necessarily serve as an accurate prediction towards refugee group participation into violent extremism, it can serve as factors that need to be addressed for violent extremism among refugees. Indeed, there are cases of violent extremism among refugees. In 2015, two attackers of the 2015 Paris terror attacks had arrived in Leros, Greece among Syrian refugees (BBC 2016). Apart from that, there have been numerous reports of

Apart from that, there have been numerous reports of refugees arrested for attempts at conducting violent extremist or terrorist acts. In January 2019, three Iraqis in Germany were arrested on suspicion of committing such an act (Harris 2019); a similar case was reported in the United States involving a 21-year-old Syrian refugee leading an IS-inspired plot.

In addition to that, refugee communities, particularly youth, are ideal recruits (Rafiq, Haras; Malik 2017). In Bangladesh, there are concerns that pro-ISIS groups would attempt to recruit refugees within camps (Batabyal 2017). The International Crisis Group's report discovered no evidence of madrasahs (Islamic schools) promoting violence or intolerance, nor recruitment attempts by jihadi groups. However, Hefazat-e-Islam, a group which has called for jihad against the Myanmar government for their treatment of the Rohingyas, does have influence over the mosques and madrasahs within the camps, through the provision of financial and technical assistance (International Crisis Group 2019; Solomon 2019).

As the conflict that caused refugees to be displaced is prolonged, refugees will continue to feel helpless. Unless there are other platforms or solutions provided to address their vulnerabilities, these feelings of hopelessness will make refugees become vulnerable (Milton, Spencer, and Findley 2013). Especially in terms of violent extremism, violent extremist groups may offer basic needs that host countries fail to provide (Mohamed 2016). Moreover, Eleftheriadou (2018) argues that long-term radicalization due to an accumulation of experiences from their country of origin and treatment within the host country, poses a greater security threat to host countries. Sarah Lischer suggested three groups to categorise refugees potential of using humanitarian assistance for militarisation, which are situational refugees, persecuted refugees and state-in-exile refugees. Situational refugees are a group of refugees who lack political cohesion and motivation to divert refugee relief in support of militarization. The Rohingya are considered persecuted refugees, having fled their country due to being targeted for their identity which is considered as group-based persecution with a weak political organisation. Categories of persecuted refugees are somewhat likely to divert humanitarian relief to support for militarization (Lischer, 2003).

In terms of ISIS threat to refugee communities in Malaysia, there have been few reports on ISIS using the Rohingya crisis as narrative for their recruitment. There has been no definite evidence that links Rohingya refugees to ISIS. However, ISIS has been trying to expand their grounds to the Southeast Asian region for quite some time. During the peak of ISIS in the Middle East, there has been a number of Malaysians supporting ISIS, either financially or physically by flying over to Syria as a foreign fighters. The internet has been the most effective tool used by ISIS to recruit fighters and supporters, and as such, the vulnerability of Rohingya refugees, or refugee groups in Malaysia is the most effective tool for radicalisation. ISIS has also been the perpetrator for one of the first bombing attack happened in Puchong in 2016.

### **Current Approaches Towards Addressing Violent Extremism**

Most counter measures undertaken by states have been focused on hard approaches such as through the military and legal systems. However, it is also important to apply soft approaches in formulating prevention or countering strategies which address the push and pull factors in radicalisation towards violent extremism. These strategies tend to engage various stakeholders, adopting a collaborative, community-oriented approach; in doing so, it contributes to increasing community resilience. CVE strategies should be designed with the situation's context in mind as it varies from conflict to conflict. CVE approaches towards refugee groups should take into account refugee experiences, taking into account each refugee crisis, their age group and their vulnerability.

Although refugee experiences vary greatly depending on their age, experiences and country of origin, there is a shared pervasive hopelessness (Milton, Spencer, and Findley 2013). As seen in previous sections, it is vital to address the refugees' situation within the host countries as it can or may contribute towards long-term radicalization. Most crises are considered Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS), where 25,000 people are in exile for five consecutive years in the host country; the UN has classified the Rohingya refugee in Malaysia as PRS (UNHCR 2019). According to the UNHCR (2016), the average duration of refugee crises is 26 years with most lasting more than 20 years. For Rohingya, their crisis has been ongoing for more than 30 years.

Echoing this, Sude, Stebbins and Weilant (2015) argue that humanitarian assistance is insufficient to address the problems and challenges faced by refugee communities. As the crisis continues to unfold, their needs will change. Initially, refugees will be concerned with survival and meeting their basic needs of food, water, shelter and security. However, if the conflict persists, additional needs such as healthcare, education and employment should be considered by host countries when formulating policies. In line with Eleftheriadou (2018), the authors stress the importance of sustainability, particularly with regard to the host country's commitment and availability of resources.

A possible CVE approach is to utilise the public health model, by utilising pre-existing programs that are aimed at other social ills for VE due to similar risk factors (Challgren et al. 2016). Generally, it involves primary levels of prevention which include non-discriminatory policies as it allows for a holistic approach to address the factors of violent radicalization. It can target the root causes of VE by addressing the basic needs such as education, access to health services, social engagement and personal development. In addition to that, it provides an opportunity to engage with the at-risk community by building partnerships and establishing trust. An important part of this is to engage with the community to find out what they need, and bringing them into the process can also ensure they are committed to it (Challgren et al. 2016).





### **Education and opportunities for the youth**

Prolonged crises can lead to lost generations, denying youths the opportunity for education and a future. Due to the situations faced by refugee children, education can provide a sense of normalcy for them and it is found that their schools see full attendance (Sude, Stebbins, and Weiland 2015). Education also plays a role in creating conditions that allow for defences against violent extremism, whilst emphasising non-violence and peace (UNESCO, 2017).

Weine and Ahmed (2012) found that idle time and unobserved spaces such as exposure to violent extremism on the internet are potential risk factors for radicalization, as the youth are left to their own devices. The lack of a future contributes to hopelessness and may stoke anger. Martin-Rayó's (2011) study found that youths in Dadaab, Kenya, who had received some form of education did not join Al-Shabaab, a militant group based in East Africa. As such, UNHCR's Refugee Education Strategy (UNHCR 2019) emphasises both access and quality of education to ensure that youth can achieve their maximum potential, regardless of their circumstances.

In addition to that, training or vocational programs should be provided for adolescents. Programs that take into account the local context and needs of the people on the ground can provide meaningful opportunities; it also serves as a viable outlet to spend their time and communicate among peers.



### **Individual and community resilience**

Resilience sees the ability to "... adapt to and overcome adversity in the face of challenging circumstances and trauma." It involves the balancing of protective and risk factors. Protective factors can be increased by introducing measures that target all levels: individual, family and the community. Support systems are crucial for building resilience and families are usually the main entity responsible (Weine and Ahmed 2012).

Ahmad and Masinda (2018) suggest that support be provided to refugees upon their arrival in the host country to help them settle in. There are different types of support that should be provided for refugees upon arrival to the host country. Basic needs such as shelter, food and healthcare are necessary to ensure refugees are able to sustain themselves in a new environment. Besides support given by the government from the host country, there is also humanitarian assistance given to refugees by NGOs.

Aside from that, communities need to be empowered, enabling them to take control of their lives – or achieve self-sufficiency. With the increased lengths of crises, self-sufficiency rather than reliance on humanitarian assistance from NGOs is preferable as it can reduce the host country's burden. Policies which can lead to societal marginalization and discrimination should be eliminated. As such, aside from basic needs support given by the host country, policies that led to refugees self-efficacy in a prolonged crisis is important to reduce the burden of the host country in receiving and managing refugees.

### The Vulnerability of Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia

Why do we need to understand the risk of radicalisation among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia? The overall aim of this study was to understand the vulnerability of Rohingya refugees towards violent extremism — is there a higher propensity of Rohingya refugees to embrace violent ideologies due to their precarious situation in Malaysia.

Through analysing all these factors, only then will we be able to recommend a possible approach and framework to address these factors, rather than focusing on the current hard-lens approach used by Malaysian enforcement agencies on Prevention or Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). Our study wishes to relay the need for a soft approach on PCVE especially as we discussed the refugees in Malaysia.

#### The key objectives of the study are:

1.



To develop a better understanding of the sentiments towards violent extremism and terrorism among Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia.

2.



To identify, analyse and evaluate the risk of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia getting radicalised into violent extremism and terrorism.

3.



To recommend comprehensive policies on countering and preventing violent extremism among the Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia.

EVERYONE IS  
**WELCOME**

## Methodology

When we decided to conduct our research on Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia, we realised there were a few challenges ahead of us. As the largest population among all refugee groups in Malaysia, they speak and write in a completely different language than Malaysians, and live in pockets of the cities with low literacy levels. Thus, different languages, low literacy level and lack of education access restricted the methodological approach we could use to conduct this research.

As such, we took on a qualitative approach in collecting our research data. Our data collection is divided into two phases with the first phase encompassing in-depth interviews and shadowing, while the second phase involves focus-group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews and shadowing. Through collaboration with local contacts in selected locations throughout Peninsular Malaysia, access to the community was obtained by field researchers who were situated in each location. Each phase focused on different aspects to enable our research team to gain a deep understanding of the Rohingya refugee groups' livelihoods. The first phase of data collection looked into the Rohingya's living situation, from access to basic needs like education, healthcare and food while the second phase studied their sentiments on violent extremism as well as their in-group and out-group networks. The locations for this research were divided into four regions; Northern region (Penang, Perlis, Kedah), Southern Region (Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka), Central Region (Klang Valley) and East Coast Region (Pahang).

Data collection took place across the four aforementioned regions, with the data for focus group discussions involving local interpreters based in each location. Meanwhile, for in-depth interviews and shadowing, data collection only involved Northern and Southern regions due to the availability of our field researchers in those two areas.

As such, the sampling method used in this research project is purposive sampling. There were a few criteria for choosing a population to be involved as a sample. The first criteria was that participants would be Rohingya refugees of 18 until 80 years old. The reason for choosing Rohingya refugees of age 18 years and above is to avoid involving underage participants that required parental consent. The second criteria of choosing Rohingya refugees were participants of both men and women. Access to Rohingya women was important to obtain gendered perspectives and experiences.

## The Instruments

There are various instruments that had been developed to measure risk of radicalisation towards violent extremism all around the world. Our research adapted a tool called VERA (Violent Extremism Risk Assessment) which is a risk assessment instrument designed to assess risk related to terrorism and violent extremism. VERA is used by trained professionals pre-judicial, judicial and post-judicial settings for individuals accused of violent extremism in European country. Our research adapted the tool in various data collection method that we used, whether via in-depth interviews or FGD questionnaires which were divided into two phases: first phases focusing on livelihood of Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia and second phases focusing on indicators listed out by VERA.

All instruments that have been constructed for the second half of the research project were based on the VERA-2 indicator which was adapted as a qualitative tool for our research. VERA-2 was a revised version by Pressman and Flockton in 2012 and 2013 by Beardsley and Beech. There are five domains included in VERA-2 accounting with 31 indicators overall. Our research purposely focused only two domains out of the five domains in VERA-2. The first domain is beliefs, attitudes and ideology while the second domain is social context and intention. These two domains account for 14 out of 31 indicators in VERA-2. Table 1 listed 14 indicators in VERA-2 that became the basis for our research instruments.

Table 1: VERA-2 Domain and Indicators

Domain	Indicators
Beliefs, Attitude and Ideology	Commitment to ideology justifying violence. Victim of justice and grievances. Dehumanisation/demonisation of identified targets of injustice. Rejection of democratic society and values. Feelings of hate, frustration, persecution, alienation. Hostility to national collective identity. Lack of empathy, understanding outside own group.
Social context and intention	Seeker, developer, consumer of violent extremist materials. Identification of target (person, place, group) in response to perceived injustice Personal contact with violent extremists. Anger and expressed intent to react violently. Expressed desire to die for cause or martyrdom. Expressed intent to plan, prepare violent action. Susceptible to influence, authority and indoctrination

These 14 indicators are evaluated to ensure each indicator is possible to be adapted to Rohingya refugees as a vulnerable community. Possible questions are then listed and discussed before being inserted into the FGD questions list. Certain indicators listed under these two domains have been deemed unapplicable for the context of the Rohingya crisis during our process of instrument construction. Those indicators are (1) rejection of democratic society values and (2) hostility to national collective identity. As such, there are no questions that have been constructed based on these two indicators.

In terms of in-depth interview questions, they were divided into two sets: the first set of questions asked during the first half of the research project, was more focused on the aspect of livelihood - encompassing education, religion, social media and their sentiments as a refugee in Malaysia. We wanted to have a better understanding of the Rohingya refugees' experience in Malaysia as their host country. This would also help in studying potential feelings of marginalisation due to their status as refugees.

The second half of the research was focused on their network of relationships, either through their interaction with local communities in Malaysia or internationally which is done through aspects of neighbourhoods, the Rohingya community network overseas and locally, shared experiences undergoing violence, and financial network. All these elements went into separate sets of questions for Rohingya men and women. The reason we tailored questions for men and women is because both sexes live very different lives within the same community. For instance, it is rare to find Rohingya women working and becoming breadwinners for their family, hence the question on financial information may not apply to them. However, they would possess more information about the neighbourhood. As such, different sets of questions allowed us to gain a comprehensive picture of the lived experiences of Rohingya men and women.

In terms of FGDs, the questions that had been composed looked into the sentiments of Rohingya refugees on violent extremism and their experiences. The same set of questions were prepared for both men and women as the focus group discussion's theme was commonly experienced between the two genders. A total of 14 questions were listed in the focus group discussion which also included visual cues that portrayed incidents related to the Rohingya crisis. As such, some of the questions constructed in the focus group discussion were stimulus-based, and related to three pictures that were selected beforehand to study the FGD theme.

For the purpose of this report, interviews and FGD transcripts were translated from Malay into English. In-depth interviews and FGDs held in areas like the Northern and Southern region used Bahasa Melayu as the medium of conversation. This is also because interpreters who accompanied our field researcher could only converse in Malay and the Rohingya language. As such, it was easier for our field researchers to transcribe into Malay language and preserve the meaning in the transcription.

### **Analysing the Data**

Data that has been collected through shadowing observations, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were then analysed using thematic analysis approach. In the thematic analysis approach, themes were identified based on data that has been collected. Our analysis was done by using NVivo applications. Codes and themes in our findings are based on repeated feedback by respondents in combination with VERA-2 indicators. This is to ensure that we successfully documented Rohingya refugee communities' social condition and relaying violent extremism sentiments among them without bias.



## FINDINGS

Our findings have been organised into several themes. Overall, there are four themes that have been identified: (1) Refugees vulnerability, (2) Psychological distress and emotional reflections, (3) Perception on violence, and (4) Rohingya networks. In terms of refugee vulnerability, our findings discussed their personal experience back in Myanmar and also their current state in Malaysia, covering the topics of finance, work and culture of their communities in Malaysia. The second theme delved into Rohingya refugee emotions towards their past and current predicament, while the third theme discussed their perception on violence, further elaborating on Rohingya refugee perspectives on violent acts and their own experiences with violence. The final theme on networks looked into Rohingya refugee relationships within their own community (either in Malaysia or overseas) and with other communities.

### Refugees Vulnerability

As we interacted with Rohingya refugees located throughout Peninsular Malaysia we identified that Rohingya refugees' vulnerability can be categorised into two: their experience back in Myanmar and the current state they are facing in Malaysia. Whenever we discussed their experience back in Myanmar, they would state the institutional persecution they received from the authorities. For example, A, a male Rohingya refugee living in Klang Valley elaborated on his experience of forced labour.

*"I left because I was afraid of forced labour. One day every week we have to do this duty. Military comes to our house and forcibly takes us to carry their belongings and build their camp. They also order us to collect bamboo to make their camp. If we do not have bamboo in our house, we have to buy from a neighbour and follow them."*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

Restriction of movement for Rohingya refugees caused difficulties for them back in Rakhine/Arakan state to fend for themselves. The constant discrimination the community faces back in Myanmar had resulted in difficulties finding work or even obtaining food supplies.

*"Yes, they are not able to buy living food and whatever they needed at home for my family and they are not able to work and go anywhere from the village that's why I have to send money, all time they have to stay at home"*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

With movement restrictions, lack of opportunities and ongoing persecution, the Rohingyas living in Myanmar have a hard time sustaining themselves. They also experience violence inflicted by the Myanmar government. The violence is instigated not only by the military but also by other government agencies such as the police. This was mentioned by our respondent in the in-depth interview,

*"My family was forced to migrate to Bangladesh and all our villages have been burnt and massacred. That's why my family was forced to migrate, finding a place to save our lives and cross the border to Bangladesh".*

(Male, Northern Region)

Leaving the country by crossing the border to Bangladesh has been their only option to protect themselves from the violence inflicted by the Burmese government.

Meanwhile, as they towards Malaysia seeking refuge, the community still faced numerous challenges. The first challenge is finding work. Most of the Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia are illiterate, though there are a small number of them who have high school diplomas or university degrees. As a result, most of them, especially men, participate in blue collar jobs such as office helpers, scrap collectors and drivers to sustain their family. Meanwhile, Rohingya women usually work from home as tailors. Some Rohingya who are more skilled are sometimes employed by organisations at a higher salary rate. For example, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Medicins Sans Frontier (MSF) and UNHCR employ Rohingya individuals with a monthly salary of RM2500.

Therefore, a lot of Rohingya in Malaysia have difficulties in sustaining themselves financially. Apart from the need to work for their livelihood in Malaysia, they also need to send money to their families abroad. Although it depends on their financial means every month, this transaction is crucial because of the dire living conditions of their families overseas.

*"RM800 to RM1000 is for their monthly needs which is for medical cost and food for one family which is not enough in the refugee camp. For your information, the food supplies in the Bangladesh refugee camp are not enough and the refugees themselves have to work on that."*

(Male, Northern Region)

In terms of the frequency of the transaction, some refugees send it on a monthly basis or sporadically, solely depending on what they can afford, and when. For example:

*"Yes, I monthly send 150,000 kyats for my family"*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

Meanwhile, some respondents said they had no fixed schedule for sending financial support to their families overseas.

*"Yes I sent. To my parents. Who are living in Bangladesh. But I cannot, I couldn't, I am not able to pay every month. Because, I have to do home work, the entire way here. And then, if sometime, I, I, I, I. If I had extra money, then I can pay"*

(Male, 31-60, Klang Valley)

The process of sending financial support to their families overseas is also not as simple as it seems to be. As refugees in Malaysia have limited rights, they do not have bank accounts that can facilitate overseas transactions. As such, they rely on their friends or agents to send the money to their family members or to neighbours of their family, depending on the available option. This financial transaction system is called the Hawala system.

In terms of culture, Rohingya communities in Malaysia differ greatly from each other depending on the state they live in. For instance, the Rohingya community in Perlis is pretty much assimilated into Malay culture through their clothing, names and the language they converse in. Our field researcher found out that some Rohingya in Perlis have even been identified as Malay by public servants and are even married to local women. Meanwhile, the Rohingya in Penang are distinct: they speak in their own language and have a community structure, with their own leaders and activities. The reason for the vast difference between the Rohingya communities in both states appears to stem from the economic activities practised in each community and the rural-urban dynamics. Rohingya in rural areas like Perlis tend to work as fishermen and peasants while the Rohingya in Penang work as helpers in markets, offices and shops, or as cleaners and scrap collectors.

As Rohingya in Malaysia are financially stretched, it is a norm for them to share a house while disregarding the gender factor. As such, there are cases of rape that happen among Rohingya women and also Indonesian women by Rohingya men. This happens as the men and women share the same house or even sometimes the same room, with no marriage ties or relationship

between them. Besides rape, the absence of proper rules and guidelines in the issues of marriage also affect some of the community members as there are Rohingya women who have been abandoned by husbands who have gone on to marry other women, and vice versa.

### Psychological distress and emotional reflections

Following through the discourse on the previous section in regards to the persecution and discrimination Rohingya refugee received back in Myanmar, the respondents we have met shown psychological distress as well as reflecting significant emotional impact. They showed disappointment, alienation, distrust, frustration and anger, mainly due to their experiences.

In terms of disappointment, these emotions were reflected through non-verbal cues and body language they showed. The disappointment was shown was not necessarily restricted towards individuals outside of their own community. Rather, some showed disappointment towards the lack of roles played by Rohingya women in Jihad.

*"There is, but because of Rohingya women do not have the spirit to do Jihad. They only wanted to make children and be a housewife only, no fighting back."*

(Female, Northern Region)

The female above (B) is a Rohingya woman who has been living in the Northern state of Peninsular Malaysia and was disappointed with the lack of fighting spirit shown by Rohingya women to fight against the persecution they faced. In some cases, the disappointment shown by the community is not only due to the lack of determination to fight for their own community, but also because of the lack of opportunity or platform to do it.

*"Yes, both men and women should have been fighting alongside each other. But we don't have an opportunity to do it."*

(Female, Northern Region)

While both examples above show the disappointment the community have towards their own community members, there are also signs of disappointment towards the international community, i.e the United Nations (UN), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

*"I am from Maundung district. In my opinion, every incident of violence that happens to the Rohingya, there must be some residents who take action through revenge and defending our motherland. Based on the law, this action is not only the responsibility of the government or OIC, but also the UN or UNHCR which also need to be responsible for our security and finding a solution for our conflict."*

(Male, Northern Region)

Since the conflict experienced by Rohingya refugees has been ongoing for more than a decade, the disappointment shown by the above male Rohingya respondent is towards the international community and bodies for not playing a significant role in protecting and solving their crisis.

Besides feeling alienated by the local community and government in Myanmar, the feeling of alienation also comes from the difference in treatment that they faced, which has been mentioned above.

*"The government of our country is not good. There is more 130 ethnicities in Burma, why only the Muslim Rohingya have so much trouble. There are Hindu, Buddhist, Mug living in good condition. We did not ask to separate our state from Burma. We just wanted to get our civil rights. The Burma Government has taken away everything we have, we don't even want it, we just want to have our rights."*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

In short, feelings of alienation among Rohingya refugee communities are based on their experiences back in Myanmar.

From interactions with the community, there is also a strong distrust of the Myanmar government and also ARSA. This is due to the fact that the Myanmar government was the one who engineered the persecution and discrimination against them.

*"Over there many people are in difficult situations. We have no more trust in the Myanmar government. The Myanmar government must restore everything."*

(Female, Southern Region)

A small group of respondents mentioned their distrust

towards ARSA. They speculated that ARSA was actually created by the government and had collaborated with the army to kill the Rohingya.

*"ARSA is not... Actually ARSA is, she said ARSA is, ARSA is created by the government. So they are the number one bad people. And then, ah... they also killed our people with the military."*

(Female, 31-60, Klang Valley)

Another respondent also argued the fact that Rohingya were being chased out of their own hometown because of ARSA.

*"About ARSA, we too heard various news from inside. They are for their own state, just like I am from Arakan. They wanted those who are refugees. They said they are doing it for the Rohingya. Why is it that Rohingya are being chased out, killed, burned, their houses burned because of them? However, I have never seen it. I have never been there. I have only heard about it."*

(Male, Southern Region)

Though ARSA has branded themselves as a Rohingya armed movement, the majority of refugees did not trust them because they had never seen ARSA or met anyone from ARSA. The only information they have about ARSA came from the Myanmar government, and as such there is apprehension towards the ARSA movement and its objectives as a whole.

Another feeling that is very obvious within the Rohingya community is frustration. Most of the frustration stems from their situation in Malaysia and the double standards in treatment from the Burmese government. In Malaysia, their frustration stems from being unable to provide education for their children - given that Rohingyas are not citizens and hence, do not have access to formal education.

*"I have no problem in having a child nor raising one. It's just that, when I think about it, it's very hard. How do I raise my children with the violence that is happening in Myanmar. And in Malaysia, as I think about it, I am not Malaysian citizen. How do I raise my children? How do I give the best education? I have to make sure he/she gets a good job. That's all. However, we are not citizens of this country. If I am there, how do I raise my children? If my own situation is not safe, what more for my own children."*

(Female, Southern Region)

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(Female, Southern Region)

Next, they expressed frustration at the problems they experienced back in Myanmar. One respondent said:

*"Malaysia government gave us CRD, we can move everywhere in Malaysia even though sometimes the police ask. In our country we cannot go from one village to another village, they take our card and always say you are Bengali, go back to Bangladesh. How many times you can hear it. We are Rohingya, our grandparent, and great grandparent was Rohingya, why do they call us Bengali. It was frustrating for us"*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

The community also accused the Burmese government of practising double standards in the treatment of Buddhists and Muslims back home. As described by one respondent:

*"I would tell you about this picture of the Buddhist samis, who made a protest and demonstration, but have not been shot by the army. But if its a Muslim scholar who wear a white shirt, did the same thing as the Buddhist, they will be hit, shot and detained by the government. Why the treatment of the government to Buddhist and Muslim is too unjust? Whereas Myanmar uphold the world democracy principle and democracy of the law with impartial rights, we too are Burmese. When we the Muslim citizens wearing white shirt were quickly shot, but if its the Buddhist, they were only warned and detained. The difference of treatment between Buddhist and Muslim by the government (double standard)."*

(Male, Northern Region)

There were also those who expressed frustration at their treatment by the Malaysian authorities.

*"There are Rohingya people who have been here since 1992 and only here for transit. For 28 years, including myself, there has been injustice and negligence by the Malaysian government. They do not care for our religion in the context of our divorce issues. They deliberately ignore us although we are also Muslims. I beg the government and Pulau Pinang department and all the muftis to defend our religion although we are people without a country."*

(Male, Northern Region)

All in all, the difficulties they faced in Myanmar and their current situation in Malaysia left members of the Rohingya community feeling deeply isolated and frustrated.

The first feeling gleaned from the Rohingya community was one of anger - towards their plight, coupled with years of being victimised. This anger also translated into the desire for revenge. One of our respondents made his feelings known during an in-depth interview:

*"How could I not be feeling angry? My wife and younger siblings were left behind. And the army who rounds the area will rape the woman once they saw woman which will be raped brutally until she's dead. Livestocks such as cows and chicken will be shot and eaten by"*  
(Male, Northern Region)

The desire for revenge often cropped up, though there was no clear mention of the target of such actions. This was closely associated with the community's desire to reclaim their rights. As one respondent said during the FGD:

*"After I saw this picture, I feel like I want to go back and protect my village through revenge. Even though I am not capable due to my physical condition due to my age."*  
(Male, Northern Region)

Another respondent also expressed vengeful feelings in an in-depth interview:

*"Yes, when me and my friends gather, we will discuss the killings. When we hear about the tyrant act, the rape and harrasment, we feel angry. We always discuss ways to protect and revenge but we do not have a system or step to do it."*  
(Female, North Region)

The presence of anger and desire for revenge was prevalent throughout all our interactions with the Rohingya community, except that most of them did not feel empowered or able to act on these desires.

### Thoughts on Violence

Following through all the psychological distress and emotions reflected by the respondents in the previous section, this section discusses Rohingya community experience being a victim of violence as well as thoughts on the use of violence. Opening a discussion on violence is indeed a hard topic for the community. For some, the experience of violence is still fresh and traumatic that they still had a hard time talking about it as the topic opened up.

As a start, the Rohingya community shared their experience receiving unfair treatment from the

Myanmar government. The Rohingya community compares the treatment given by the Myanmar government to them versus other ethnic communities on numerous occasions.

Religious elements have been consistently mentioned as comparisons of unfair treatment were mentioned by the Rohingya refugee community. Another participant then continues to state the persecution they received compared to other groups by tying it up to differences in religious identity.

*"Why because we are Muslim, we need to be killed. They don't want Muslims to reside there. They don't want to hear that there are Muslims who reside there. They don't want to hear any Muslim. They don't want to. They don't do any crime like robberies or kill other people. They don't. But why when they were called as Rohingya Muslim, they get killed. If it is other groups, they will care for them. Non-muslim, they will care for them. Muslim, they will not. If it is Muslim, they will kill them"*  
(Female, Southern Region)

The Rohingyas have also become victims of institutional discrimination. The types of institutional discrimination that Rohingya communities face come in the form of apartheid, arrests, and loss of belongings. The act of apartheid against the Rohingya communities were inflicted in the form of confiscating citizenship documents. This was mentioned by a few of our respondents in the in-depth interviews.

*"After that the Buddhist government took our identification card, they said that they need to change the identification card. They confiscated it from us. After they took our IC, they declared that we are not Burmese. They said we are not from Myanmar, we came from Bangladesh. They confiscated all our belongings"*  
(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

*"Yes, they took the old one, giving the new one but the first Burmese Government gave a document that was like citizenship, it was powerful. We used it for travelling abroad too. Later on they changed to new cards and took back our rights slowly. Now they issues a NVC<sup>12</sup> card which is for foreigners"*  
(Male, Southern Region)

<sup>12</sup> National Verification Card (NVC) issued by the Myanmar government which essentially categorises Rohingya as foreigners.

The act of seizing their citizenship documents is a form of apartheid. The act of taking their belongings by force is not only being done by the government, particularly the army, but also by the local community, especially the Rakhine people. This was mentioned by one of our respondents:

*"If anyone went to the market, Rakhine people snatched money and other valuable things from us."*

(Female, East Coast Region)

The loss of their belongings and the hardships in getting their food resources is due to discrimination. The discrimination has been consistently inflicted by the army and the local community which is only one part of the discrimination that they faced in daily lives. Rohingya communities, whether in Myanmar or other countries, are at risk of getting arrested by the local authorities in their current locations. One of our respondents reported his experience in getting arrested by Bangladesh police as he was on a humanitarian mission to deliver supplies funded by a Malaysian NGO to Rohingya in Bangladesh.

*"Ever since then, I never went out of Malaysia as I experienced a lot of threats. I was once detained in Bangladesh in 2003. I was detained in Bangladesh as I was accused of smuggling as I was bringing supply from MAPIM. I was actually bringing food supplies that had been donated from all over the world to Cikgu Azmi to be brought to Bangladesh. I was their representative in relaying the supply but then the Bangladesh government mistook me and arrested me."*

(Male, Northern region)

Arrests by local authorities in a different country can also be due to the fact that some of the Rohingya communities do not have proper travel documents and are reliant on their UNHCR documents. Back in Arakan, getting yourself arrested without any reason seems to be a normal sight for the Rohingyas.

*"...without any reason the authorities went and checked the house in my village and arrested the Rohingya people then put them in jail.."*

(Male, East Coast Region)

The refugees have also reported on cases of persecution that they experienced back in Myanmar. Institutional persecution is persecution mainly acted on by the military and government of Myanmar, while collaborated persecution is done by the military, government and local communities. Our respondents described their experience of institutional persecution

back in Myanmar.

*"One Friday during Jumma prayer the military come and shoot randomly at Jamatees. About 500 people died in that time. All Rohingya man, after dead military took the dead bodies by their big truck"*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

*"Then start violence, they burn Rohingyas house. It stopped after a few months, again started in 2017."*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

The above excerpts are only a few out of a number of transcripts that we have from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

There have also been reports of coordinated persecution between military, police and local communities in Arakan, Myanmar. These three groups collaborated together to orchestrate the burning of Rohingya community villages, as per mentioned by our respondents:

*"The Rakhine people and Lon Hteing (Riot Security Police) and military came together in our village and burnt down the houses."*

(Female, 31-60, East Coast Region)

These constant experiences with violence, either by the military, government or locals were clearly one of the biggest reasons for them to seek refuge somewhere safer.

It is due to these violence the communities have experienced by various actors that some parts of the community justifies the use of violence. Their justification of violence is also for various reasons and targeted to specific actors only. The first reason shared by the community to justify the use of violence is the failure of the government or authorities to ease their situation. Few respondents that we have met (not all) thought that it was necessary for them to fight for their own destinies since there has been no other entity that has been able to help them. A few excerpts from the conversation we have is stated below.

*"I do not hope that the world will help, especially the problem of Muslims, the world will not care to solve the problem. That's why we understand that there will be no other people that will help us. We and our own generation would be trained to fight for our own destinies and rights there."*

(Female, Northern region)

<sup>13</sup> MAPIM stands for Majlis Perundangan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia which is a Malaysian Islamic Organisation Council

The respondents noted that international groups and fellow Muslims had been silent, and were doing nothing to resolve their crisis. They were not hopeful that the world would come to their rescue. The long ongoing conflict faced by the Rohingya has made them lose hope for help and solution by their own government or other international organisations.

The second reason that Rohingya states as justifying the use of violence is for self-defence. Seeing the way their own government or other related agencies corroborated or perpetuated the persecution or violence that they experienced, their only option to defend themselves is through the use of violence.

*"Actually there is no violence in Islam and violence is not allowed, whether or not the issues that have no relevance or usefulness, troublesome or being extreme or teaching something violent. But when your ruler is a tyrant, injustice and doing violent acts to certain minorities regardless of religion and people. So it is compulsory and their rights for the people from minorities or who are being abused to fight for the return of their respective rights and returning their religious rights and human rights. As such, if the ruler/government is tyrant and people are being abused, it is their right to fight for their rights. If it is a just ruler like in Malaysia, then there is no need for a movement to fight"*

(Male, Northern region)

The above showed us that the use of violence is seen as necessary for them, not only due to failure of relevant authorities or for self-defence purposes, but also to regain their rights.

As the Rohingya community showed the feeling of anger, revenge and helplessness due to their situation, it was not surprising that some of them showed an intention for revenge by stating some violent acts they are willing to take against the Myanmar military.

*"If I get them, I will kill the same as they are killing our people"*

(Female, 18-30, Klang Valley)

*"I feel like eating them when I see the army... I am angry, I am furious. I can eat the army. My heart feels disturbed"*

(Female, Northern region)

Most of these responses were shown during FGDs that IMAN had organised with the community. The FGDs utilised a stimulus-based approach whereby pictures of the Myanmar army were shown to Rohingya participants and were met with a host of angry

responses showing their intention to seek revenge towards those who engineered violence against their communities.

On top of describing violent acts for revenge, there are also elements of jihad mentioned by some of the Rohingya respondents that we have met. This is possibly due to the discrimination and persecution that they received as a Muslim in Arakan/Rakhine state.

*"If I can, I am willing to go back and fight. If I have the passport and I am able to go back home safely, I will go back to Arakan to joining forces with the fight movement for a holy war to rescue our brothers and religion that have been seized"*

(Female, Northern region)

The intention to perform jihad is viewed as an option to regain their rights and defend themselves from the violence that has been consistently inflicted on them. The reason for their incapability to commit jihad right now is due to their vulnerability as refugees and lack of resources to do so. Even then, their focus on Jihad is for the right to return and live in their homeland with the enemy specifically pointed towards the Myanmar government and army. These tendencies can only get stronger as other (peaceful) routes seem to have been exhausted.

### Rohingya Network

Throughout the interview and discussions we had with the Rohingya community in Malaysia, we found out that the community maintains a close relationship with fellow Rohingya in their neighbourhood or overseas. Often when it comes to Rohingya community interaction overseas, the Rohingya community that they often know who live outside of Malaysia is in Bangladesh. An example was given by one of our respondents in his in-depth interview.

*"My family was forced to move to Bangladesh and all of our villages have been burned down and a lot of our villagers have been murdered in massacre. Hence, my family has been forced to flee to another place to save their lives by crossing the border to Bangladesh."*

(Male, Northern Region)

There are also Rohingya communities that live in other countries besides Myanmar and Bangladesh.

*"My older brother in Saudi Arabia. Second one in Malaysia. The rest are in Bangladesh refugee camp"*

(Male, 31-60, Klang Valley)

The connection to Rohingya who live in other countries are usually maintained through communication technology such as the internet and phone calls. In terms of their connection to the Rohingya community in Bangladesh, sometimes they channel some funds to their families in Bangladesh as those living in the refugee camps there face severe limitations, especially in obtaining food. Meanwhile, the connection between Rohingya communities who live in Malaysia are often housing based, which means that they look after those who live around them. This was described to us by one of our respondents.

*"Yes, I know every single Rohingya who lives here."*

(Male, 31-60, Klang Valley)

Besides getting to know each Rohingya who lives around in their neighbourhood, they also sometimes help each other when there are people amongst them who are in need.

*"Many Rohingya people help. We can't continue doing this and that. The reason is because we don't have an IC, our children also don't have an IC. If it is my own state, if they are kind, if there is a third country who calls, I think 90% of us don't want to go. Because it is a different country. Then we need to become a different person, a new person. When I think about it, if I can go back to my own country, if the situation becomes better."*

(Male, Southern Region)

The connection and solidarity among members of the same Rohingya neighbourhood appears tight-knit, as they extend help to one another in times of need. Sometimes, these help can be extended in the form of pooling a certain amount of money for hospital admittance. Due to the low pay they received in Malaysia, this connection and solidarity is very important for them to sustain their living in Malaysia.

In terms of the Rohingya community relationships with Malaysians, we found out that the community itself is not necessarily wholly detached from the Malaysian community. Some of their local connections are among migrants who lived here, especially around their neighbourhood.

*"Rohingya, Bangla, Indonesian, Chinese, and Malay Muslim are living here."*

(Male, 18-30, Klang Valley)

One of our respondents also knows certain locations with a high concentration of Burmese residents. However, both communities rarely interact.

*"This 2019. I just found it. Before that, there's none. We have never met. In the Ampang area, there's a lot of Burmese there. But here, he (pointed to Mr AH), he's there."*

(Male, Southern Region)

The locals they know also belong to various ethnicities, such as Indians, Malays, Punjabis, and Chinese. Some of them even know a little bit of history regarding their local neighbourhood.

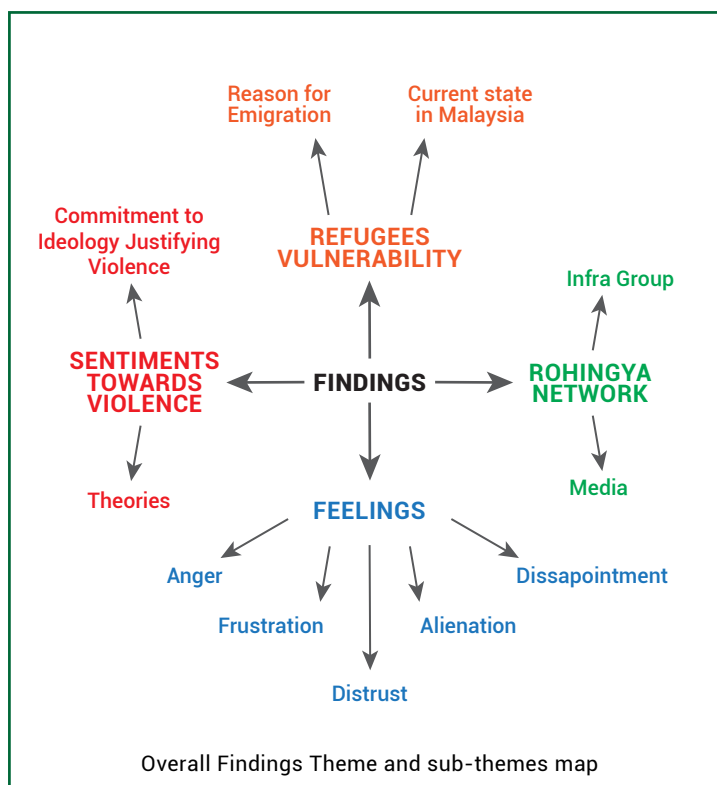
*"In Taman Ciku, Bukit Mertajam, the majority are Chinese. Based on my understanding, this place was formerly one of the strongholds for the communist. Berapit, in Malay history, is formerly a stronghold of communist and the Chinese here are very much violent. However, they knew my activity and respected me. Often there are NGO and government agencies who oversee me and from there they respect me."*

(Male, Northern Region)

Besides having locals as their neighbours, the Rohingyas also interacted with locals when it came to work and paying rent as they were often employed by Malaysians to do odd jobs and being given a place to stay. This network and interaction between the Rohingya community and the locals demonstrates that they feel quite at home in this society. However, they continue to feel alienated by their own country and its people.

## ANALYSIS

Our first research objective was to develop a better understanding of violent extremist sentiments among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. This was based on our findings that had already been collected based on VERA-2R, particularly based on two out of the five domains in the instruments. These two out of the five domains in VERA-2R instruments became the basis for our development of qualitative instruments which are (1) beliefs, attitudes and ideology and (2) social context and intention. As such, the analysis and discussion of our findings will be divided into three sections; (1) beliefs, attitudes and ideology, (2) social context and intention; and finally move onto (3) discussing our findings as a whole. The analysis and discussion will be based on themes and sub-themes listed in the findings section which are tied to elements in VERA-2R instruments.



## Beliefs, Attitudes and Ideology

Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia have clearly shown that they are distressed and suffer from trauma. This can be seen from the two themes: (1) thoughts on violence (2) psychological distress and emotional reflections, and (3) refugees' vulnerability. The numerous persecution and discrimination that has been faced by the ethnic group back in Arakan is the root of their victimisation. This sentiment has been clearly expressed and repeatedly highlighted in our data. Their victimisation clearly has impacted their livelihoods, looking to the extent of the psychological distress and emotions that they have reflected throughout the research. The roots of their victimisation comes from two parties, (1) Myanmar army and government and (2) Myanmar society.

While the Myanmar society is partially involved in their discrimination and persecution, it was the Myanmar army and government that received much anger and hatred from the Rohingya refugees, that the element of hate is present throughout the data. Since the persecution and discrimination is engineered by the Myanmar army and government, their focus on revenge, anger which led to demonisation is towards these two. Their obstacles from seeking revenge is their incapability in terms of financial and skills as well as being away from home, since living in Malaysia means that the target of revenge is not close or accessible to them. As such, the feelings of hate, persecution and alienation existed and continuously experienced by the Rohingya refugees.

However, their demonisation towards the Myanmar army and government does not mean that they reject democratic society and values. Discussions on refugee vulnerability have shown the way the Rohingya refugees believe in their rights as human beings as well as supposedly Myanmar citizens. They expressed their intention to go back to Myanmar if their safety and rights as citizens are guaranteed. Since the Rohingya community are labelled as foreigners in Myanmar, hostility towards national identity is not something that can be addressed though the discourse shows their intention to be part of Myanmar society as a citizen.

## **Social Context and Intention**

In terms of commitment towards ideology justifying violence, two indicators listed in VERA-2R instruments are absent among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia which were (1) seeker, developer and consumer of violent extremist materials and (2) personal contact with violent extremists. In either of the themes listed in the findings, none of the contacts we have met acknowledge that they are seeking, consuming or developing extremist materials as well as have personal contacts with violent extremists. However, it is important to point out that the community strongly believes in the need to uphold societal and democratic values since they repeatedly mention their rights to return and live in peace as an ethnic in Myanmar multiple times. The community has shown the ability to accept different societal values, looking at the culture and livelihood they have built on in Malaysia.

Three remaining indicators are present among Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia which were; (1) identification of target (person, place, group) in response to perceived injustice, (2) anger and expressed intent to react violently and (3) expressed

desire to die for cause or martyrdom. These three indicators are present in the two themes, thoughts on violence and psychological distress and emotional reflections. In both themes, each indicator was expressed verbally or emotionally by the community.

In short, only a small group of Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia do express the desire to react violently and die for a cause. However, it is important to note that since Rohingya refugee community is a vulnerable group that ran away from persecution and injustice, indicators such as (1) identification of target in response to perceived injustice, (2) anger and expressed intent to act violently and (3) expressed desire to die for a cause of martyrdom are mostly related to the cause of their vulnerability. Since none of the Rohingya refugees we have met has shown indicators of (1) seek, develop or consume violent extremist materials and (2) personal contacts with violent extremists, it is safe to assume that the community are resilient against violent extremism in terms of social context and intention.



Refugee Camp, Image Credit: Sam Mann

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Our analysis of the themes based on the indicators in VERA-2 has its limitations. While we analysed and discussed our themes and findings based on the VERA-2 indicator, we have no concrete evidence that there is indeed a significant relationship between the themes we had built and VERA-2 indicators. Our themes had been based on the findings we compiled from in-depth interviews, FGDs and shadowing observations. Additionally, the need to interpret our findings from the Rohingya language to Malay or English came with challenges of their own as actual meanings could be lost in translation. Although the necessary measures were taken to ensure our interpreters on the ground were skilled and knowledgeable, we still needed to account for the possibility of misinterpretation. Similarly, the presence of gatekeepers or facilitators to gain access to the Rohingya community also presented the risk of biases in the selection of respondents for the research. To mitigate this problem, multiple gatekeepers were appointed in each location.

## A Summary

Our first research purpose is to investigate the push and pull factors influencing the Rohingya community in Malaysia towards violent extremist groups. Our analysis and discussion suggested that pull factors towards violent extremist groups among Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia may be present in terms of violent intention, Jihadism intention and justification for violent action, as well as feelings of frustration, distrust, anger and alienation. All of these elements which were present under beliefs, attitudes and ideology may be considered as the pull factors that drew Rohingya refugee communities in Malaysia towards violent extremist groups.

In terms of push factors, Rohingya refugee communities are denied opportunities to work in Malaysia while the financial system is also disadvantageous to them. These then provide the motivations for them to seek assistance from violent extremist groups. There is also a lack of access to formal education for Rohingya children, although non-governmental organisations have attempted to fill that gap by setting up refugee schools. The challenge henceforth is for the community to be given opportunities that come with recognised credentials, so as to help them improve their social mobility.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This recommendation was put forward based on the push and pull factors towards violent extremism identified in the study as well as feedback from stakeholder engagement.

### 1. National Policy on Refugee Rights

Supported by stakeholders that we have engaged with, the purpose of a national policy on refugee rights is to build Malaysia's own refugee database and ensure legal access to employment, financial and healthcare services. This policy is important to address the concerns that have been previously shared on financial limitations experienced by refugees that have impeded their ability to access basic necessities such as proper living conditions, healthcare services and education institutions. A formal refugee policy will also help in better integrating these refugees into the Malaysian community and will be a good way to address the concerns Malaysia have in regards to receiving refugees in Malaysia: humanitarian law versus national security concerns. This recommendation will not only benefit refugees as the target population involved, but also Malaysia, economy and security wise.

### 2. Specific Healthcare Support

Rohingya refugees that we have met showed signs of psychological distress due to the violent experience they received back in Arakan/Rakhine as well as during the traumatic journey to Malaysia. As such, we would like to suggest psychological support such as mental health first aid intervention to be given to refugees as soon as they land into Malaysia borders and registered as refugees. This would be able to mitigate the psychological distress and intense emotions that we found throughout our encounter with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. Other healthcare support we would like to add is on family planning, especially in terms of education and access to family planning devices. Family planning is not only important to increase the family quality of life, but also to increase refugees' health equity.

### 3. Access to Education

Refugees in Malaysia must be given access to education institutions; children, adults and women. Children and women's access to education are basic human rights that need to be provided for them. Malaysia is a signatory of the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) starting 1995. Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC) which mentions:

*"Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity."*

Education is the most powerful tool to increase the resilience of a community towards all kinds of threats; whether in the form of discrimination or socioeconomic activities.

Meanwhile, education for adults in our suggestion refers to local languages as well as skills training that will benefit the adult refugees to secure employment opportunities. Refugees will be able to contribute to the Malaysian economy especially the sectors that depend on large numbers of migrant workers. In turn, the refugees will be able to secure formal jobs that will increase their financial resources and security, compared to the current situation where most refugees that we have met are struggling to survive on meagre daily wages.

### 4. Peacebuilding Initiative

In order to achieve peace in the Arakan/Rakhine conflict, IMAN would like to suggest the legalisation of the Rohingya advocacy organisation that is present in Malaysia. This recommendation will be able to give Rohingya refugees in Malaysia the ability to participate in the process of peacebuilding initiatives for their conflict. Therefore, this will address the concerns shared by the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia whereby they felt that the authorities failed to help them. Then, collaboration between local authorities, Malaysian NGOs and Rohingya advocacy groups will be built to construct a peace education program for the younger generation of Rohingya in Malaysia. This will enable the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia to feel empowered and move one step forward in searching for a solution to their ongoing crisis.

## APPENDIXES

Table 1: Refugees Vulnerability

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Reasons for Emigration	Institutional Persecution	<p>"I left because I was afraid of forced labour. One day every week we have to do this duty. Military comes to our house and forcibly takes us to carry their belongings and build their camp. They also order us to collect bamboo to make their camp. If we do not have bamboo in our house, we have to buy from a neighbour and follow them."</p> <p>"Yes, they are not able to run to Bangladesh because the military and the police stop at their checkpoints. If they tried to flee to Bangladesh the authorities are not allowed to pass through the checkpoints."</p> <p>"We left our country due to the persecution. No one will leave the country without persecution. Will you leave your country without persecution?"</p>
	Lack of Opportunities	<p>"Yes, they are not able to buy living food and whatever they need at home. For my family, they are not able to work and go anywhere from the village. That's why I have to send money, all the time they have to stay at home."</p> <p>"There is no job for Rohingya, if I find a job Bangladeshi local people will regret Rohingya to assign any job. No job, no money, this forces me to leave my country."</p> <p>"I left my country, because of the riot, I was not able to work and go anywhere from my village without working. We weren't able to survive and support our family that's why I came here to save my family life."</p>
	Violence of Myanmar Government	<p>"Oh My God, only for violence we left from our country."</p> <p>"My family was forced to migrate to Bangladesh as all of our villages have been burnt and massacred. Because of that my family needs to migrate and find a place to save our lives through crossing the border to Bangladesh."</p> <p>"In the year of 2012 when I was there, the authorities together with the residents who turn into militants, besides the army, persecuted us. They kill our livestock, rape, turn us into forced labour. As such, we are not willing to stay there."</p>

## APPENDIXES

Table 2: Psychological Distress and Emotional Reflections

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Anger	Anger	<p>"When I saw the picture, I felt so angry. Because if the public did it, we can settle between ourselves. The problem is now the government and the army is the one who made a plan like that. They burned people's houses without reason."</p> <p>"How I don't become angry? My wife and my siblings were left there. The army that patrols during the night will rape women once they see them until the women is dead. Our livestocks like cows and chicken, they will shoot and eat them."</p>
	Revenge	<p>"So after I look at this picture, I feel like going back to revenge for the sake of protecting my hometown. Despite my physical condition as I am already old."</p> <p>"He is the leader of ARSA or Al-Yakeen, he once lived in Pakistan, he obtained citizenship of Pakistan, and lived in Saudi Arabia. He is teaching religious subjects which pays him a high salary, his salary is 10k. In my opinion, after the mass massacre tragedy in 2012, of course all people will wake up because a lot of people have been burned to death. So their anger coupled up with their capabilities, all people who had undergone tarbiah (education) with their physical capabilities will not be able to stand themselves. As such, he rises and resigns from his positions and comes to Malaysia, probably to start his movement mission by making a wake up call to the community. Some people support, while some don't. So that's the story. These people then made a group named as Al-Yakeen."</p> <p>"Yes, when we gather around with our friends, we will talk about recent issues of killing that we have heard, in addition to cruelty, harassment and rape. We often become angry and discuss ways to avenge but we don't have a system or ways to do it."</p>
Frustration	Current state of Myanmar	<p>"Malaysia government gave us cards, we can move everywhere in Malaysia even though sometimes the police ask. In our country we cannot go from one village to another village, they take our card and always say you are Bengali, go back to Bangla. How many times you can hear it. We are Rohingya, our grandparent and great grandparent was Rohingya, why do they call us Bengali. It is frustrating for us"</p> <p>"I don't have a problem raising my children or having a child. But there are some times that I think it's hard. How do I want to raise my children, with the violent situation in Myanmar. Even when we raise our children in Malaysia, we think of the fact that we are not citizens here. How do I want to let my children grow? How am I able to give the best education? I need to make sure my children get a good job. That's all. Despite the fact we are not citizens here. If it's over there, how can I raise my children there when even myself am not safe, let alone my children."</p>
	Double standard treatment	<p>"I will tell you about the picture of the Buddhist Sami, it is like this Buddhist Sami who did a protest and demonstration but was not shot down by the army. However, if its a Muslim scholar, wearing a white cloth, doing the same thing as the Buddhist, they will be beaten, shot, and detained by the government. Why there are such unfair treatment between Muslim resident and Buddhist resident by Myanmar government? Though Myanmar supports the idea of world democracy and supposedly upholds the democracy law, there should be equal rights as we are also Burmese. When the Muslims wearing white cloth make a protest, we are immediately shot, but if it's the Buddhist, they are only detained. There is difference in treatment between Muslim and Buddhist by Myanmar government (double standard)."</p>

## APPENDIXES

Table 2: Psychological Distress and Emotional Reflections

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Distrustful	Myanmar government	<i>"The migrated Rohingya have been in Malaysia since 1992, and we are only in transit. It has been 28 years including myself, this is injustice and negligence by Malaysian government who does not care about religion and our divorce issues. They purposely did not care about us even though we are Muslim. I appeal to the Pulau Pinang Department and all muftis to protect our religion even when we are stateless."</i>
		<i>"We are talking about this Buddhist Sami picture, when they are doing protest, the authorities have detained them peacefully. The army has always been respecting them. But when it comes Muslim communities or our scholars demanding for our rights through peace demonstrations, they don't allow us to go out by going from houses to houses and quickly shot without warning. This shows that Myanmar is not a democratic government and they abuse the law."</i>
		<i>"People over there have been through difficult times. We do not trust the Myanmar government anymore. The Myanmar government must restore everything."</i>
		<i>"Whatever they told us, we will not trust them. We will not even go there, because this thing is made by the government."</i>
Alienation	ARSA	<i>"I only hear about ARSA through some of my contacts. They fight for their states, like myself from Arakan. They want people from the refugees. They said that the things they do is for Rohingya. But why is it that because of them, Rohingya was being chased out, massacred, their house being burned down. I have never seen it. I have never been there. I have only heard about it."</i>
		<i>"ARSA is not.... Actually ARSA is, she said ARSA is, ARSA is created by the government. So, they are the number one bad people. And then, ah... they also killed our people with the military"</i>
		<i>"It is we are hearing from our parents, grandparents that they were also learning it from Burmese Buddhist. Saying the same thing. I do not see there will be peace in the country for us. They do not accept us as citizens, we cannot go to buy food from the market. If they see us ask punishment. We cannot leave from house even cannot sleep at home for their torture. Very sad condition always"</i>
		<i>"The government of our country is not good. There is more 130 ethnicities in Burma, why only the Muslim Rohingya have so much trouble. There are Hindu, Buddhist, Mug living in good condition. We did not ask to separate our state from Burma. We just wanted to get our civil rights. The Burma Government has taken away everything we have, we don't even want it, we just want to have our rights"</i>
Disappointment	Helpless	<i>"Yes, when I gather around with my friends and talk about recent massacre, as we heard news about cruelty, sexual harassment and rape. We are always angry and discuss ways to defend and avenge but we don't have a system or step to do it."</i>
		<i>"There is, but because Rohingya women do not have the spirit for Jihad. They only like to make a child and be a housewife only, there's no fight."</i>
		<i>"Yes, women and men should be fighting together but we don't have a chance. We don't have a chance."</i>

## APPENDIXES

Table 3: Thoughts on Violence

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Justification for violence	Authorities fail to help	<p>"According to our stay here, we live in accordance with UNHCR and PBB though we don't get any assistance from any people when we need it. Our daily work even with UNHCR document status, its hard for us to apply for work anywhere."</p> <p>"... even if I am already old, if I can go back to the ARSA group to fight to regain my homeland and justice over there, because the world cannot afford to give us justice."</p> <p>"I don't hope the world can help, especially when it comes to Muslim's problem, the world will not care to solve our problem. As such, we understand that there will be no people to help us and our generation will be trained to wake up and protect our own fate, to protect our rights there."</p>
	Self defence	<p>"Violence or fight to protect our homeland against violence by Myanmar is because we cannot remain calm as long as our rights are not returned by Myanmar."</p> <p>"In the lecture given by ARSA group, the lecture is a wake up call for us to spread awareness to our youngsters which is for the sake of regaining our rights and dignity as a Muslim over there."</p> <p>"Actually, there is no violence in Islamic teaching, and Islam disallow violence. Islam also disallow you to do things that does not gave you benefit, troublesome or made you become extremist or rough. However, when your ruler is a tyrant and your state is being unjust,, the minority or the group who experience violence has the right to fight for their respective rights, their religious rights. So if the ruler is tyrant and the residents are being discriminated against, they have the right to fight for their rights. If it is a just ruler like Malaysia, then there is no need for movement to fight against Malaysia."</p>
	Reclaiming rights	<p>".....Quoting the hadith 'loving your homeland is part of your faith'. As such, no matter what condition I am in Malaysia, even when I am already married to a local woman, even when half of my heart is with my homeland, while the other half is here. When our security has been assured, we will go back to our homeland."</p> <p>"Though we have a lot of assets, our rights remain deprived. When Myanmar returns our rights, we will not fight anymore. But if Myanmar continues to persecute us, we will continue to fight to regain our rights."</p> <p>"For independence, for separation. Separation is not violence, but to regain our rights, to return our residence or our own home."</p>
	Evidence of Extremism Ideology	<p>Violent intention</p> <p>"If I get them, I would kill them as they had killed our people."</p> <p>"I could feel myself eating them when I saw this army (picture) ... I was feeling resentful and angry. I want to eat this army. Heart feeling restless"</p> <p>Jihadism tendencies</p> <p>"... if possible I will be able to come back and fight and if I have a passport and can return home safely I will return to Arakan to join the movement and will fight to save our brother and religion that has been seized."</p> <p>"... so it is better to die on the holy path, to fight for the country of our country, rather to die there than to live here in the midst of atrocities in our own Muslim country. Therefore, this is when you look at this picture, remembering that the police conduct daily house-to-house patrols against the Muslim community only. Even though I am old, if I can, I would go back to the ARSA group and fight the war to restore homeland and justice there, because the world cannot afford justice."</p>

## APPENDIXES

Table 3: Thoughts on Violence

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Injustice	Unfair treatment/ mistreatment	<p><i>"Burmese government rebuilds Buddhist house if effected why not a Muslim house. Is it because we are Muslim?"</i></p> <p><i>"Why are we killed because we are Muslim? They don't want Muslim to live there. They don't want Muslim to live there. They don't. The Muslims don't even have any fault like robberies or kill people. They don't. But because we called ourselves Rohingya Muslims, they have to kill us. If it's any other race, they take good care of them. They take good care of Kafir, but Muslims they don't. If it's Muslims, they will kill them."</i></p>
Institutional discrimination	Apartheid	<p><i>"Yes, they took the old one, giving new one but first Burmese Government gave the document as a citizenship, it was powerful. We used it for abroad travel too. Later on they changed to new cards and took back our rights slowly. Now they issue a NVC card which is for foreigners"</i></p> <p><i>"Afterwards, the Buddhist government took my IC, they said we need to change your IC. They confiscated it. After they took our IC, they quickly said we are not citizens of Myanmar, we are from Bangladesh. They took everything."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, I was a muslim, being born by a Muslim mother. I was responsible for helping my religious brother and sisters of Rohingya that have been discriminated against and always helped in protecting religion and race."</i></p>
	Arrest	<p><i>"Since that day I have never went out of Malaysia as I've got threatened a lot. I was detained in Bangladesh in 2003. I was detained in Bangladesh as I was tasked to bring supply by MAPIM, the supply was donated by people all around the world, sent by Cikgu Azmi to Bangladesh. I was the representative at that time to give the supply. Afterwards, the Bangladesh government detained me as they misunderstood me."</i></p> <p><i>"...without any reason the authority went and checked the house in my village and arrested the Rohingya people then put them in jail.."</i></p> <p><i>"I am from Wafara. The situation there was very cruel. A lot of the army fights against ARSA and a lot of my relatives have been captured and thrown into jail. Until this day they are still not free."</i></p>
	Belonging loss	<p><i>"Burmese military often comes to take our livestock, crops from the land. We do not have any freedom..."</i></p> <p><i>"If anyone went to market Rakhine people snatched money and other valuable things from us"</i></p> <p><i>"Myanmar... if it's easy, they gave back our land. We will be very glad. We are born there after all. If everything is easy, I wanted to go back right now. It's because they burn the houses. My own sister's children have been burnt. The child's inside the house, cannot get out. The child has a disability. They went inside and shot the people. They can't pull the child out. They burn the houses. If the situation already dies down, we will go back."</i></p>

## APPENDIXES

Table 3: Thoughts on Violence

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Institutional presecution	Lives loss	<p>"Rakhine people, torture and slash to our people, that's why we left our country. Actually, if we cannot, if we cannot resettle in another country, better to stay in Malaysia. We don't want to go back to Myanmar"</p> <p>"One Friday during Jumma prayer the Military come and shoot randomly to Jamaah. About 500 people died at that time. All Rohingya man, after dead military took the dead bodies by their big truck"</p> <p>"Many Rohingya women and babies killed by the Rakhine Buddhists doctors when the Rohingya women were delivering babies in the government hospital..."</p>
	Village burnt	<p>"That time in Sittwe there was, the Rakhine people came. Burning and killing the Muslim Rohingya people. That time so many people were fleeing to the sea. And then at that time I was also very very scared of the Rakhine people."</p> <p>"Because the houses burned down already, so we had no shelter. So that's why all leave Bangladesh and come here."</p> <p>"Then start violence, they burn Rohingyas house. It stopped after a few months, and started again in 2017."</p>
	Sexual violence	<p>"Military will come directly Rohingya house and take the lady forcedly to rape in the school or Madrassa. After a rape the Rohingya lady, either they will be killed or take somewhere else."</p> <p>"I have never been sexually harassed, but a lot of my friends and neighbours have been raped till dead."</p> <p>"A lot of people sexually harassed and raped people in Arakan."</p> <p>"I've heard stories often told by my friends in the Northern region of Muadung, Qualifara and Khuwarbi. In that area, they often burn and commits atrocities by sexual harassment till the victim is dead."</p>
Collaborated persecution		<p>"The Burmese military and Buddhist people want Rohingya to leave country that why they make violence for the Rohingya"</p> <p>"The Rakhine people and Lon Hteing (Riot Security Police) and military came together in our village and burnt down the houses"</p>

## APPENDIXES

Table 4: Rohingya Networks

Sub-themes	Codes	Excerpts from Interview/Focus Group Discussion
Intra-group	Overseas	<p>"My older brother in Saudi Arabia. Second one in Malaysia. The rest are in Bangladesh refugee camp"</p> <p>"My parents and family members are over there (Bangladesh)."</p> <p>"My family was forced to migrate to Bangladesh as our whole village has been burned down and a mass massacre happened. Due to these incidents, my family migrated through crossing the border to Bangladesh to save our lives."</p>
	Locals	<p>"My older brother in Saudi Arabia. <b>Second one in Malaysia.</b> The rest are in Bangladesh refugee camp"</p> <p>"Actually no one disturbs to my family but nearby my flat there is another Rohingya family"</p> <p>"Yes, I know every Rohingyan who lives here"</p> <p>"Rohingya people help each other a lot. We can't continue living here. Because we don't have IC, our daughters also did not have IC, there are no schools. If it's my homeland, if it's already gotten better, even if a third country called us, I think 90% of our people will not go. Why? It's because it's a different country. So, different people, new people. If I can, I think, I want to go back to my hometown, if things become better."</p> <p>"Rohingya, Bangla, Indonesian, Chinese and Malay Muslim are living here"</p>
Inter-groups	Migrants	<p>"There is thing first, in Pudu, Hotel Central, Buddhist Tzu Chi free clinic"</p> <p>"Bangladeshi people here"</p> <p>"Rohingya, Bangla, Indonesian, Chinese and Malay Muslim are living here"</p>
	Locals	<p>"In Taman Ciku Bukit Mertajam, majoriti residents are Chinese. According to my understanding, this area is formerly a stronghold of Communist, Berapit, in Malay history, is a communist area. Even when Chinese here are a little bit strong and a little bit violent, they know my activities and thus respect me. There's always NGO and government agencies here, they oversee my activities and from there they respect me."</p> <p>"Chinese, Indian, Punjab, Malay"</p> <p>"My neighbors are very good with us they don't disturb us at all"</p> <p>"No, one help us here, just sometimes Malay Muslim is helping to us"</p> <p>"Rohingya, Bangla, Indonesian, Chinese and Malay Muslim are living here"</p>

