

The ARAKAN PROJECT

Unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh:
Crackdown, forced displacement and hunger



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'This place has become a trap. We can enter but we cannot go out! I do not know what will happen here. The situation is getting worse day by day.'
(Interview # 3)

***Many children
are begging
for food to
provide a meal
for their
families***



'This camp is not good for us. We cannot go out to find work and no one helps us with food aid. If we are not allowed to collect firewood in the hills, what will happen to us? How shall we survive?'
(Interview #1)



Every day, registered refugees in the adjacent Kutupalong Refugee Camp share their meagre ration with hungry children of the makeshift camp.



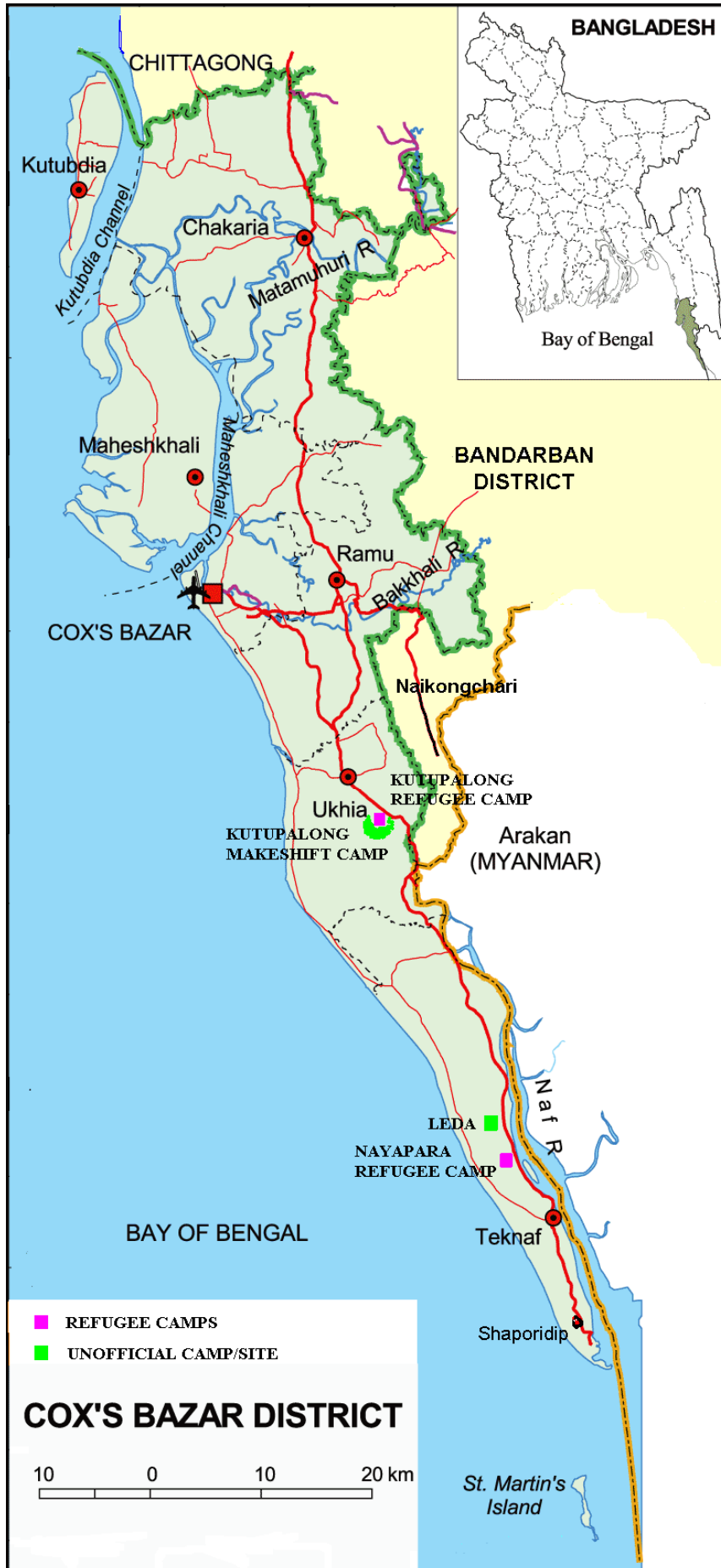
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Map of Cox's Bazar District

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The Arakan Project is a research-based advocacy group monitoring the Rohingya situation in Burma/Myanmar and in other countries in the Asian region in order to promote their human rights and their protection as refugees.
The Arakan Project is a member of the Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network.



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Unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: *Crackdown, forced displacement and hunger*

An unprecedented crackdown by Bangladesh law enforcement agencies against unregistered Rohingya refugees who had settled outside the two official refugee camps in Cox's Bazar District started on 2 January 2010. More than 500 Rohingyas were subsequently arrested in January and the crackdown continues. Some of those arrested were pushed back across the Burmese border and others were charged under immigration legislation and sent to jail. In parallel to the roundups, there is a resurgence of anti-Rohingya movements among the local population and of anti-Rohingya propaganda in the local media fuelling xenophobia and pressing the government to take action against the Rohingyas. A similar campaign started earlier in 2009 in Bandarban District and is still ongoing.

Over the last few weeks, fearing arrest, harassment or facing expulsion, more than 5,000 self-settled Rohingya have already fled their homes and most flocked to the Kutupalong makeshift camp in Ukhia in search of safety. The makeshift camp population is now estimated to have swelled to over 30,000. Forced displacement appears to be a device to push the vulnerable unregistered Rohingya into this camp.

The makeshift camp residents, including uprooted families, do not receive food assistance and are now denied access to livelihood as they would face arrest if they left the camp to find work. Food insecurity and hunger is spreading rapidly and a serious humanitarian crisis is looming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the Government of Bangladesh:

1. To immediately cease arrests, push-backs and forced displacement of the unregistered Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban Districts
2. To recognise that the unregistered Rohingyas are stateless asylum seekers who fled persecution in Burma and are in need of international protection; and
3. To provide them with adequate protection, access to livelihood and other basic services.

1. BACKGROUND

The Rohingya are an ethnic, religious and linguistic minority in Burma/Myanmar inhabiting mostly the three townships of North Arakan bordering Bangladesh. Their number in North Arakan is estimated at about 725,000. Professing Islam and of South Asian descent, they are related to the Chittagonian Bengali across the border but are distinct from the majority population of Burma, who are of Southeast Asian origin and mostly Buddhist. They gradually faced exclusion in Burma, especially since the military takeover in 1962. They were rendered stateless by the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law which mainly confers the right to a nationality on members of the 135 'national races' listed by the government, among which the Rohingya do not feature. Denial of citizenship is the key mechanism of exclusion, institutionalising discrimination and arbitrary treatment against this group. Severe restrictions on their movement and marriages, arbitrary arrest, extortion, forced labour and confiscation of land are imposed on them. The combination of restrictions and abuses has also a dramatic impact on their economic survival.

Hundreds of thousands of stateless Rohingyas have fled brutal oppression in Burma. Impoverished Bangladesh already witnessed two mass exoduses of 250,000 Rohingya refugees in 1978 and again in 1991/92, which were followed by forced repatriation. Today, 28,000 remain in two precarious refugee camps assisted by the UNHCR and a few NGOs. But the exodus has never stopped and new arrivals do not have access to the existing refugee camps and there is no mechanism for them to seek protection.

The unregistered Rohingya

An estimated 200,000 unregistered Rohingya refugees have settled among the local population, in slums and villages mostly throughout Cox's Bazar District but also in smaller numbers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, eking out a hand-to-mouth existence without any humanitarian assistance, vulnerable to exploitation and arrest. While keeping them invisible and portraying them as economic migrants, Bangladesh has generally tolerated their presence, but anti-Rohingya sentiments have steadily grown among the local population, manipulated by the local political elite and the media.

Back in 2002, in response to threats of eviction, a first makeshift camp was established near Teknaf and the 10,000 residents were ultimately relocated to a new site in Leda in June 2008. In early 2008, a new makeshift camp started sprawling around the Kutupalong refugee camp as a consequence of eviction threats against self-settled Rohingya during the voter registration preceding the national election of December 2008. As the population kept increasing, sections of the makeshift camp were demolished by the Bangladesh authorities on three occasions in June and July 2009.

In parallel, at the end of 2007, the Bangladesh law enforcement agencies started arresting and pushing back Rohingya across the border to Burma. Initially, only new arrivals were targeted but, since mid-2009, self-settled refugees have also been deported.

2. THE CURRENT CRACKDOWN

The recent crackdown is unprecedented as, for the first time, law enforcement agencies – the police and the BDR (Bangladesh border security forces) – are actively involved in rounding up unregistered Rohingya at their workplace, along roads, on buses and in their homes, simultaneously in all sub-districts where Rohingyas have settled.

At the same time, a xenophobic campaign is being orchestrated by Anti-Rohingya Committees formed and allegedly funded by the local political elite, voicing their hostility to the Rohingya presence more loudly than ever and demanding that the government take action against the Rohingya. Announcements have been disseminated by loudspeakers in villages and towns ordering the Rohingya to leave and also threatening locals harbouring them with arrest and prosecution. The local media act as a campaign vehicle for anti-Rohingya propaganda.

This would suggest a concerted strategy instigated at the central government level and not just an occasional outburst of anti-Rohingya sentiments at the local level.

2.1 – Possible reasons for the crackdown

The reasons behind this crackdown as well as its objectives still remain obscure to The Arakan Project and other observers in the area. It is particularly puzzling as the government had responded positively to donors and other stakeholders in 2009 in considering registration for this population.

However, the fact that mass displacement is directed toward the makeshift camp would indicate intent to evacuate unregistered Rohingyas from mixed settlements where they used to live in order to separate them from the local population and regroup them in the Kutupalong makeshift camp.

Some observers believe that the crackdown is certainly an attempt by Bangladesh to stop the continuous trickle of Rohingya asylum seekers from Burma by spreading panic among the unregistered population. Sources in Burma estimate that about 8,000 Rohingyas fled in 2009 - a larger number compared to the previous year. Bangladesh is concerned that the national election planned in Burma for late 2010 and the erection of a border fence may generate further instability and could result in increased outflows of Rohingya refugees. The anti-Rohingya drive may therefore be intended to act as a deterrence strategy. Following the spread of the crackdown to the whole of Cox's Bazar District, Rohingya asylum seekers from North Arakan have practically ceased to cross the border.

2.2 - Chronology of events

Two phases in the current crackdown can be identified so far:

- in Bandarban District of the Chittagong Hill Tracts where it started in mid-July 2009 and intensified in October
- in Cox's Bazar District where arrests began on 2 January 2010.

▪ **Bandarban District**

The voter list updating by the Bangladesh Election Commission appears to be a trigger rather than the main motive. In Bandarban District, initial arrests and push-backs of Rohingya residents coincided with the voter list updating exercise in mid-July and stepped up in October after the Election Commission announced that voter lists would be re-examined in 8 sub-districts (4 in Bandarban District in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and 4 in Cox's Bazar District)¹ on allegations that many Rohingyas had been fraudulently included in the electoral roll with the help of election officials and local political representatives.

Sub-districts earmarked for voter list review

Cox's Bazar District	Bandarban District
Cox's Bazar Municipality	Bandarban Municipality
Ukhia	Naikongchari
Teknaf	Alikadam
Ramu	Lama

▪ **Cox's Bazar District**

However, in Cox's Bazar town, police raids started on 3 January, after the voter list had already been reviewed and finalised in December 2009 and cannot therefore be attributed to the updating exercise.

The crackdown in Cox's Bazar District follows the announcement in the Bangladesh national media² picked up by the BBC and other international wire services on 29 December 2009 that Myanmar had agreed to the repatriation of 9,000 Rohingya refugees during a meeting between Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes and Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister U Maung Myint. This was clearly a political statement for domestic consumption. The figure discussed at the meeting was reportedly 6,000 and not 9,000. Moreover, 6,000 refugees had already been cleared for repatriation in the 1990s but had refused to return. While there was nothing new in this announcement and no sign in the refugee camps that a repatriation exercise was imminent, the local media started stirring up local sentiment against the Rohingyas.

The sequence of events and incidents that follow pointed to a disturbing coordination and alliance between three stakeholders: law enforcement agencies (police and BDR), civil society through Anti-Rohingya Committees³ led and allegedly funded by the local political elite of the ruling party, the Awami League, and local media as a campaign vehicle inciting intolerance.

¹ *The Daily Star*, 'EC to probe Rohingyas on voter lists', 3 October 2009
http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/print_news.php?nid=90181

² *The Daily Star*, 'Myanmar to repatriate 9,000 Rohingyas', 28 December 2009

³ Anti-Rohingya Committees are active in Ukhia and Teknaf, not in Cox's Bazar. The one in Teknaf was established in 1996 but the one in Ukhia was formed in 2009. Their leadership belongs to the Awami League in power but their membership also includes supporters of opposition parties. They became particularly vocal in late 2009.

- **29 December 2009:** A misleading political declaration that Myanmar had agreed to the repatriation of 9,000 refugees was published in the media.
- **31 December 2009:** The Minister for Food and Disaster Management, Dr. Abdur Razzak, accompanied by the local Awami League MP, Abdur Rahaman Bodi, visited the refugee camps and interviewed refugees who reiterated that they would not repatriate voluntarily before significant improvements take place in Burma. The same day, the Anti-Rohingya Committee in Teknaf delivered a speech demanding that the Rohingya be cleared out of the area.
- **2 January 2010:** Seven local newspapers in Cox's Bazar claimed that hundreds of Rohingya refugees escaped from the camps in fear of repatriation⁴. Our refugee team denied such movements. Police started arresting Rohingyas on buses travelling from Teknaf towards Cox's Bazar, mostly unregistered refugees, not camp refugees.
- **3 January 2010:** Police raids started in Cox's Bazar town, initially targeting Rohingya rickshaw-pullers.
- **13 January 2010:** The Anti-Rohingya Committee in Ukhia held a meeting demanding that the government take action to stop infiltration of Rohingya into Bangladesh and move ahead with repatriation. The same day the crackdown intensified in Ukhia. Police also put up a temporary checkpoint along the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar road near the Kutupalong camp, aimed at curtailing Rohingya movement.
- **14 January 2010:** The local media stated that the crackdown was not effective because Bangladeshis protect the Rohingyas and called for prosecution of anyone harbouring them⁵.
- **15-16 January 2010:** Crackdowns started in various locations in Teknaf Sub-district. In Teknaf town and many villages, there were public announcements by loudspeakers that all Rohingyas should leave and that locals sheltering them would also be arrested.
- **18 January 2010:** The Anti-Rohingya Committee in Ukhia organised a meeting with international NGOs but their demands were mostly business-oriented.
- **21-22 January 2010:** Rohingya tenants, evicted from their rented rooms in Teknaf, started gathering and putting up shanties near the Teknaf bus terminal but the police ousted them the next day and told them to return to their homes.
- **24 January 2010:** The BDR commander held a meeting with local reporters seeking their cooperation in the crackdown in the 'national interest'.
- **25 January 2010:** A human chain was organised in Ukhia by an Anti-Rohingya Youth Committee with the slogan: "Kick out Rohingyas! Save the Country!"
- **28 January 2010:** The Anti-Rohingya Committee of Teknaf met once more and again pushed their 7-point demand for a greater Chittagong free of Rohingya.

⁴ The Daily Ajker Deshbidesh, 'Rohingyas unwilling to repatriate scatter in different places', 2 January 2010

⁵ The Daily Dainandin, 'Absconding Rohingyas are sheltered by locals: civil society suggests to lodge sedition case against their protectors', 14 January 2010 (translated from Bengali)

- **31 January 2010:** The local media reported that 500 Rohingyas were arrested in Cox's Bazar Sub-district in January 2010⁶

- **4 February 2010:** Raids against Rohingyas started in Ramu Sub-District. Local media stated that 2,200 Rohingyas had been pushed back to Burma over the last 6 months⁷.

- **6 February 2010:** Round-ups started in Chakaria Sub-District

The crackdown continues in Ukhia and Cox's Bazar whereas the situation has temporarily calmed down in Teknaf. A detailed chronology of incidents, including arrests, is attached in the Annex.

2.3 - Arrests and push-backs

Hundreds of Rohingyas, including women and children, have been arrested in Cox's Bazar District alone over the last month. The arrested Rohingyas have either been informally deported across the border to Burma, which amounts to *refoulement*, or charged under the Foreigners' Act and jailed. In Cox's Bazar town and its surroundings the police are conducting arrests and prosecutions whereas in Ukhia and Teknaf, BDR and police are both involved in round-ups but those arrested are generally pushed back at BDR border posts.

▪ Push-backs/Informal deportation to Burma

The majority of those arrested have been pushed back across the Burmese border. No official figures have been released but we believe they are in the hundreds⁸. This policy of informal deportation of Rohingyas started at the end of 2007 and was increasingly implemented in 2008 and 2009. Initially, only new arrivals were targeted but, since the crackdown began in Bandarban District in mid-2009, self-settled refugees have also been deported.

These deportations generally took place across the Naf River or over the forested land border. They are 'informal' or unilateral because the BDR do not hand over the deportees to the NaSaKa on the Burmese side but simply dump them over the borderline since the BDR is well aware that the Burmese authorities would not formally readmit Rohingyas.

These push-backs violate the principle of *non-refoulement* recognised as international customary law which prohibit states from returning refugees and asylum seekers to places where their lives and freedoms could be threatened. It is believed that many deported Rohingya have managed to sneak back into Bangladesh but this is not always the case. In July 2009, three Rohingya families, including women and small children, who had resided in Bangladesh for many years, were pushed back to Burma from the BDR checkpoint in Naikongchari, Bandarban District. They encountered a NaSaKa patrol and were re-arrested. In August 2009, the adults were sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment on immigration charges, which they are currently serving in Buthidaung jail.

⁶ *The Daily Bankkhali*, '25 Myanmar citizens pushed back', 1 February 2010

⁷ *The Daily Bankkhali*, 'Eight Myanmar pushed back in Naikongchari', 4 February 2010

⁸ *The Daily Bankkhali* (see above) quoted 2,200 over the last 6 months but we believe this figure has been inflated. Estimates of The Arakan Project range around 1,200

▪ **Imprisonment and risk of indefinite detention in Bangladesh**

The number of Rohingya arrested and then jailed on charges under Bangladesh immigration laws, the Foreigners' Act or the Passport Act, could not be ascertained but is believed to be in the hundreds. On 11 February, a rapid survey in the Kutupalong makeshift camp alone revealed that 240 family members of residents are currently in detention. Before January, arrested Rohingyas were mostly pushed back and the police rarely filed immigration cases against them; therefore we can assume that the vast majority among those 240 detainees were arrested in January 2010.

Arrested Rohingyas charged with illegal entry have been transferred to Cox's Bazar and Bandarban prisons. Detention conditions are generally very poor with severe overcrowding.

The detention of Rohingya is of particular concern and they are at risk of indefinite detention. Pre-trial detention can be excessively prolonged – 3 years on average. Even after completing the term of their sentence, stateless Rohingya generally remain in custody as no legal mechanism exists to release them other than formal deportation to Burma, which the Burmese authorities systemically refuse, or to access UNHCR protection. Before the crackdown started, approximately 100 'releasable' Rohingya were found in indefinite detention – 3 of them having been imprisoned for the last 18 years.

Some Rohingyas arrested during the crackdown have been released before a case was lodged, either when their employers intervened or against the payment of bribes at police stations – these raids also providing new sources of income for law enforcement agencies.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRACKDOWN

This unparalleled and still ongoing crackdown against unregistered Rohingyas, propped up with anti-Rohingya rhetoric and xenophobia, has had serious effects. It has turned the local population against the Rohingya, generating a climate of impunity leading to acts of violence. Fear of arrest, assault, push-backs or eviction have uprooted thousands of unregistered Rohingyas, compelling them to abandon the places where they had settled, sometimes for decades, in order to seek safety elsewhere. Finally, it has deterred Rohingya in North Arakan from seeking protection across the border.

▪ **Aggression by the local population**

The crackdown and xenophobia incited by local Anti-Rohingya committees, including loudspeaker calls for expulsion, has undermined relations with local communities among whom the unregistered Rohingyas live, seriously increasing their vulnerability. On the one hand, locals with an interest in protecting them such as landlords and employers face threats of punishment and feel compelled to dismiss or evict them, whereas on the other hand these hate campaigns incite local goons to attack and harass Rohingyas with total impunity. When the crackdown started in Teknaf, agitators from the Anti-Rohingya Committee grabbed Rohingya passers-by and rickshaw pullers, snatched their money and sometimes handed them over to the police. Robberies and assaults on Rohingyas became much more prevalent and rape has been reported (see Interview No. 1).

- **Forced displacement and hunger**

Fear of arrest, attacks by locals and eviction orders have created widespread panic among the unregistered Rohingya and have uprooted them from their homes and means of livelihoods, compelling them to escape to seek safety elsewhere. But there are no more safe places for the Rohingya and the only location where arrests have not taken place so far is the Kutupalong makeshift camp. The makeshift camp is therefore the only destination where displaced Rohingya can still go. Some have moved north towards Chittagong in sub-districts where there is no police drive. But, as the crackdown has expanded to Chakaria, even these areas have become insecure. The massive crackdown appears to be a deliberate plan to displace the unregistered Rohingya and regroup them in the makeshift camp.



Moving into the Kutupalong makeshift camp



Building a new shelter in the makeshift camp

4. THE KUTUPALONG MAKESHIFT CAMP: AT THE BRINK OF A HUMANITARIAN DISASTER

At the end of January 2010, the unregistered Rohingya population in the makeshift camp has been estimated at over 30,000, a huge increase of up to 4,000 displaced in just four weeks. The makeshift camp population had steadily grown. Since October 2009, families displaced from Bandarban District have entered the camp and the total population had reached 26,000 at the end of 2009. But since the crackdown started in Cox's Bazar District, thousands of unregistered Rohingya have flocked in, seeking protection against arrest and eviction.

Denial of access to livelihood

Makeshift camp residents do not benefit from any food relief and therefore must fend by themselves to find work and feed their families. Few livelihood opportunities are available in the area and the presence of such a large Rohingya population already puts a toll on the local labour market, increasing competition for jobs and exacerbating tensions with local communities.

To access work, camp residents must go out of the camp. However, since the crackdown started, they have been prevented from leaving. When the Anti-Rohingya Committee in Ukhia launched their campaign in mid-January, the Ukhia police set up a check-point on the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar road just north of the makeshift camp, specifically to prevent Rohingya residents from moving out of the area. The police and BDR also checked buses and arrested Rohingya passengers. Rohingyas cannot even go to the local market or they would face arrest. Locals also participate in the drive, catching Rohingya and handing them over to police. The roadside where camp residents used to hang out is now empty.

Unsustainable coping mechanisms and risk of starvation

Confined in the makeshift camp, unable to go out to find work and without any food assistance, desperate camp residents as well as new arrivals use negative coping mechanisms such as collecting firewood, begging, using up savings, borrowing food and reducing meals.



Collecting and cutting firewood



Women returning to the makeshift camp with firewood

Collecting firewood became the camp residents' primary means to secure some basic cash, allowing them to purchase food for the day. Men, women and children go to the nearby forested hills and collect not only firewood but also live trees and branches, further damaging the local environment. They then sell these in the adjacent refugee camp, inside the makeshift camp and sometimes to locals who come to buy it from them, as they are not allowed to sell it to the villagers outside the camp.



However, since the end of January, even access to the forest has been hampered as Forestry officials not only collect entry fees but also seize their knives and bundles of firewood. Women have been raped in the forest while collecting firewood.



Many children and old women have turned to begging for survival. Restricted in their movement, they can only beg at the adjacent Kutupalong refugee camp. Other women have also gone to offer themselves as free domestic helpers for registered refugees, in return for something to eat.

Existing residents of the makeshift camp are the most vulnerable, as newly-arrived Rohingya often bring some emergency savings with them. However, these savings will soon be used up. Others borrow food from their neighbours but most often from the registered refugees in Kutupalong refugee camp.

Women and children without a male family member present are particularly vulnerable. Some men try to slip out of the makeshift camp attempting to reach Chittagong to find work there, leaving wives and children in the makeshift camp. Moreover, an estimated 240 families have at least one member in jail.

Preventing makeshift camp residents from accessing food also puts an enormous strain on the livelihood of registered refugees in the adjacent Kutupalong refugee camp as they share their meagre food relief rations with helpless unregistered refugees.

As days and weeks go by, the physical condition of makeshift camp residents is rapidly worsening. An unusually high number of deaths have been recorded. According to humanitarian agencies, these are caused by disease, with malnutrition as an aggravating factor. Death from starvation may appear soon if this situation is prolonged.

Housing conditions

In addition to mounting hunger spreading in the Kutupalong makeshift camp, displaced people arriving also suffer from lack of proper shelter. Locals only allow them to build a hut for 300 Taka per plot – the fee having suddenly increased from 100 to 300 Taka. In these winter nights, lack of blankets and inadequate plastic sheet roofing let dew and cold penetrate the makeshift huts, exposing children to disease.

Lack of security

As hunger is spreading in the makeshift camp, residents are scared that violence may escalate among starving refugees, in addition to possible attacks by the local population.

Compelled to move to the makeshift camp but not allowed access to food, makeshift camp residents are very much afraid that the Bangladesh Government might push them *en masse* across the border to Burma.

A major humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding for the unprotected Rohingya in Bangladesh. This will deteriorate if the Bangladesh authorities do not immediately put an end to this massive crackdown and continue to deny access to food and livelihood to the unregistered Rohingya refugees.



Girl begging for food in the official refugee camp

ANNEXES

1. Chronology of incidents recorded by the Arakan Project field team
2. Short interviews with Rohingya displaced to the Kutupalong makeshift camp



Rohingya family in the makeshift camp hit by hunger

Source: Arakan Project

Chronology of incidents recorded by The Arakan Project field team

Date	Place	Events
2 Jan	Ukhia	Local media fabricated news that many refugees have fled from the camp in fear of repatriation First arrests on the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar road
3 Jan	Cox's Bazar	Police raids start in Cox's Bazar town – 26 Rohingya rickshaw pullers arrested
4 Jan	Cox's Bazar	13 Rohingya rickshaw pullers arrested
5 Jan	Cox's Bazar	12 Rohingyas arrested
6 Jan	Cox's Bazar	20 Rohingyas arrested
7-9 Jan	Cox's Bazar	70 Rohingyas arrested
10 Jan	Whaikong, Teknaf	17 Rohingya arrested in different places and pushed back in Waikhong
13 Jan	Kutupalong, Ukhia	Anti-Rohingya Committee of Ukhia organized a meeting demanding the government to take action
14 Jan	Cox's Bazar	7 Rohingyas arrested
15 Jan	Ukhia	28 Rohingyas arrested and pushed back by BDR in Balukhali
15 Jan	Shaporidip, Teknaf	Police crackdown started in Shaporidip
15 Jan	Teknaf	Police raids started in Teknaf
15 Jan	Kerontali, Teknaf	16 Rohingya men arrested by BDR Dumdumia and pushed back to Burma
16 Jan	Villages in Teknaf area	Announcement by loudspeakers that all Rohingya must leave and locals who give them shelter will be arrested
16 Jan	Ukhia	36 Rohingyas arrested on buses and pushed back by BDR
16 Jan	Taingkhali, Ukhia	8 Rohingyas, including women and children, arrested and pushed back by BDR Balukhali
16 Jan	Dumdumia, Teknaf	8 Rohingyas arrested on a local bus and pushed back by BDR Dumdumia
17 Jan	Teknaf	Anti-Rohingya Committee handed over Rohingyas to police Assaults and robberies on Rohingyas – Panic spread
17 Jan	Ukhia	16 Rohingyas arrested by police on buses going to Cox's Bazar
17 Jan	Ukhia	Anti-Rohingya committee organize hunger strike
17 Jan	Cox's Bazar	15 Rohingyas arrested in Link Road by police
17 Jan	Dumdumia, Teknaf	13 Rohingyas arrested and pushed back
18 Jan	Ukhia	Anti-Rohingya Committee held meeting with authorities and NGOs
18 Jan	Teknaf	Chaos reigns: Police conduct raids at night, arrest Rohingya but release them against bribe + members of Anti-Rohingya Committee rob Rohingya in the streets
18 Jan	Shaporidip	7 Rohingyas arrested
18 Jan	Kalatali, Cox's Bazar	19 Rohingya men, women and children arrested and probably pushed back by BDR
19 Jan	Leda	Residents of Leda site arrested at BDR checkpoints and held
19 Jan	Jaliapara, Teknaf	More than 60 Rohingya men, women and children arrested and brought to Teknaf police station
19 Jan	Shamlapur, Teknaf	Order by loudspeakers for Rohingya to leave and locals to evict them

19 Jan	Whaikong, Teknaf	35 Rohingyas, mostly women and children, arrested on buses while trying to reach the Kutupalong makeshift camp but released
19 Jan	Teknaf	8 Rohingyas arrested and immigration case filed
19 Jan	Ukhia	19 Rohingya arrested from buses to Cox's Bazar, including 10 women and handed over to BDR in Balukhali
20 Jan	Mosni, Teknaf	8 Rohingyas arrested by locals and handed over to police
20 Jan	Teknaf	10 Rohingyas arrested: 2 registered refugees + 10 Leda residents
20 Jan	Nayapara, Teknaf	1 refugee boy abducted by locals who demanded 40,000 Taka for his release. The refugee camp police rescued the boy.
20 Jan	Shaporidip	BDR arrested Rohingyas in markets, roadsides, etc and brought two jeeps full of arrestees to BDR Dumdumia who snatched their money and released them.
21 Jan	Mosni, Teknaf	Local village committee beat refugees from Nayapara found in the local market, including women and children
21 Jan	Teknaf	Rohingya tenants evicted from their rooms by landlords. With no place to go, 25-30 families started putting up a shanty near the Teknaf bus terminal
21 Jan	Ukhia	Police arrested 5 Rohingya from buses on the way to Cox's Bazar. They were handed over to BDR and pushed back
21 Jan	Kutupalong	Masked youth gang assaulted and robbed 3 Rohingya women in the Kutupalong makeshift camp
22 Jan	Teknaf	50-60 families already built shanties near the Teknaf bus terminal. In the afternoon, police and BDR ousted them and told them to go back to their former accommodation
22 Jan	Ukhia	33 Rohingyas arrested in Ukhia and immigration case filed
23 Jan	Ukhia	11 Rohingyas arrested from local buses going towards Cox's Bazar at a temporary road checkpoint of Ukhia police
23 Jan	Ukhia	44 Rohingyas all living in the makeshift camp and returning on buses were arrested at a temporary road checkpoint of Ukhia police
24 Jan	Cox's Bazar	Meeting with journalists organized by the BDR commander at the Cox's Bazar Press Club seeking cooperation from the media, claiming that BDR cannot stop infiltration if Bangladeshis help them, acting against the national interest.
24 Jan	Ukhia	29 Rohingyas arrested by police on buses at checkpoint: 14 handed over to BDR Balukhali for push-back and 15 charged on immigration case and jailed
25 Jan	Ukhia	Human Chain organized by Anti-Rohingya Youth Committee – Their slogan is "Kick out Rohingyas! Save our country!"
25 Jan	Cox's Bazar	9 Rohingya arrested in outskirts of Cox's Bazar by police
28 Jan	Teknaf	Anti-Rohingya Committee held meeting to pressure the authorities
30-31 Jan	Cox's Bazar	25 Rohingyas arrested by police and handed over to BDR for push-back
2 Feb	Ukhia	57 Rohingya arrested from buses at checkpoint near makeshift camp: 38 pushed back by BDR Balukhali and 12 sent to jail.
3 Feb	Lama, Bandarban	8 Rohingyas arrested and pushed back in Naikongchari
4 Feb	Ramu	Crackdown starts in Ramu Sub-district.
6 Feb	Cox's Bazar	Police arrested 12 Rohingya but released them after being bribed

6 Feb	Shaporidip	BDR arrested 22 Rohingyas, including one woman, and allegedly pushed them back from Teknaf
6 Feb	Chakaria	Crackdown starts in Chakaria Police arrested 11 Rohingyas and sent them to jail
7 Feb	Cox's Bazar	Police checked buses coming from Teknaf and also people in the Cox's Bazar bus station and arrested 10 Rohingyas
7 Feb	Shaporidip	BDR chased a rowing boat with passengers coming from Burma on the Naf River. Some jumped into the river but BDR arrested 8 Rohingya and later pushed them back in the same boat
8 Feb	Ukhia	Police again barricaded the road near the makeshift camp and checked vehicles coming from Teknaf. Police arrested a few Rohingya but sent them back to Teknaf after receiving bribes
9 Feb	Cox's Bazar	Police arrested 6 Rohingyas, mostly rickshaw pullers. They were released after the rickshaw owner went to the police station but they had to pay 2 to 4,000 Taka as a release fee.
10 Feb	Gunarpara, Cox's Bazar	A police van entered Gunarpara at 2 AM and arrested 13 Rohingyas
10 Feb	Chakaria	Police arrested 8 Rohingya, including 3 women.
10 Feb	Link Road, Cox's Bazar	Police checked buses going toward Chittagong, arrested 7 Rohingya, snatched their money and sent them back to Teknaf
10 Feb	Ukhia	Police arrested 9 Rohingya at their temporary road checkpoint and send them to Bandarban jail



▪ **Interview # 01 - Displaced from Cox's Bazar to the makeshift camp**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Sex/Age: Male, 75
Marital status: Married with 4 children and grandchildren
Village of origin in Burma: Pauk Taw Township
Occupation in Burma: Farmer
Arrival in Bangladesh: 1988
Residence in Bangladesh: Kalatali, outskirts of Cox's Bazar
Occupation in Bangladesh: Cook on a fishing boat
Flight to the makeshift camp: 21 January 2010
Date and place of interview: 31 January 2010 in Kutupalong makeshift camp
Interview Ref. 10/02-A

I settled in Bangladesh long ago. I left Burma just after the 1988 uprising when the situation suddenly deteriorated there. I have lived in Kalatali in Cox's Bazar since I arrived in Bangladesh and I have always worked on fishing boats. When I was younger I was a fisherman and now as an old man I can't do such heavy job and I work as a cook for the crews of fishing boats.

During my 22 years in this country I could have easily enrolled as a voter and got a Bangladeshi ID card but I never tried to do this because I always think about my native village and my country of birth where I left my land, house and ancestral properties and I still hope that one day there will be peace and democracy in Burma and that my family and I can return. Therefore, due to this dream, neither my family nor I attempted to register in the voter list.

Expulsion, assault and rape by the locals

About one month ago [early January 2010], local villagers of Kalatali started telling the Burmese Rohingya living in the area that they should leave the village and find a place to live elsewhere. They said that this was ordered by the chairman and members of the local government body. Initially, we ignored this but every day locals came to tell us the same message again and again.

Around the same time, the police started a drive against unregistered Rohingya and arrested many on the roads. I was terrified and decided to stay away from my house - sometimes near the hills and other times in the fishing boat. I lived like this for about 20 days. During the day time I used to come back home but I was afraid to even go to the market.

Suddenly all my local neighbours and acquaintances turned against me and my family as if they did not know us. My daughter, who is mother of three children but abandoned by her husband, used to work as a domestic helper in the house of a local Bangladeshi in Kalatali. She was returning home in the evening when some local youths attacked her on the way and raped her. My daughter cried for help and, luckily, some local village elders rescued her. She informed the police and the police visited her. She gave the name of the perpetrators to the police and the village elders but no action was taken against them.

I have also been robbed twice while returning home from the local market. Each time, some local youths whom I have known since they were born assaulted me and snatched my goods

and the money I had in my pocket. I know them and they know me but they did not care about that. They said: “You, Burmaya, what are you doing here? We warned you and your people to leave this area but you are still here. Go away wherever you want but leave our village!”

I noticed that many other Burmese people were leaving Kalatali quietly and I observed that the situation was going from bad to worse every passing day. So I also decided to leave Kalatali. The question was: Where to go? Everywhere locals had turned hostile toward the Rohingya! I did not have enough money to take my family to Chittagong and rent a house there. The only place where I could go for some safety was the Kutupalong makeshift camp where many other Rohingya also went to take shelter. That is why I am here now and all my sons and daughters followed me here too.

Surviving in the Kutupalong makeshift camp

I had to buy this small plot to erect a shanty for 300 Taka [US\$5]. Some local powerful men, such as Sona Ali who belongs to Maulvi Bakhtiar’s gang, demanded money from all new arrivals in the makeshift camp. Anyone who refuses to pay is prevented from building a hut. Like everyone else I had to pay 300 Taka to use a plot of land 12 x 18 feet. Building a hut is more important than food. Without a roof, the family will have to sleep under the sky in the cold winter nights. So everyone pays.

Since I moved here ten days ago, I went to the hills every day to collect firewood which I sell to the official refugee camp nearby but also to those who can afford to buy inside the makeshift camp. Some local people who have teashops in Kutupalong village also come here to buy firewood and I sell to them too because we cannot go outside the makeshift camp for fear of being arrested.

Over the last couple of days, it has been getting even more difficult to collect firewood in the nearby hills. The Forestry Department has increased surveillance and prevents people from entering the forest. Even when we manage to enter in the morning, paying a 10 Taka bribe to a Forestry villager (who looks after the forest on behalf of the Forestry Department), we are caught on the way back in the afternoon since the person who took the bribe has disappeared and is replaced by others who then seize our knives and all the firewood that we have collected.

This camp is not good for us. We cannot go out to find work and no one helps us with food aid. No one speaks on our behalf. If we are not allowed to collect firewood in the hills, what will happen to us? How shall we survive? I feel very insecure here as there is no job available and we cannot even go out to find work.

I feel even more insecure when I think that we have no country. We are neither Burmese nor Bangladeshi. Where should we go? Where is our final destination? In Burma, the Burmese authorities and the Rakhine say that we are Bangladeshi and that we should leave, and here the local people tell us to go back to Burma. We were born and brought up in Burma but we look like Bangladeshis – but we are not accepted by any of these two countries. My thoughts are only about how we will survive here. I also fear that we might be sent back to Burma forcibly. Since we were born, we have always been on the run! How can we think about the future? There is only darkness before us!

▪ **Interview # 02 – Displaced from Teknaf to the makeshift camp**

Ethnicity/Religion:	Rohingya, Muslim
Sex/Age:	Male, 50
Marital status:	Married with 5 children
Village of origin in Burma:	Koe Tan Kauk village, Rathedaung Township
Occupation in Burma:	Day labourer
Arrival in Bangladesh:	1993
Residence in Bangladesh:	Habirchara beach village, Teknaf
Occupation in Bangladesh:	Day labourer/fishing labour
Flight to the makeshift camp:	16 January 2010
Date and place of interview:	31 January 2010 in Kutupalong makeshift camp
Interview Ref.	10/03-A

I fled to Bangladesh 17 years ago and since then I have been living in Habirchara, a beach village to the west of Teknaf and have been renting a hut for 200 Taka a month. My sons and daughter live with me, except the eldest who is married. I used to do casual labour, most often on fishing boats since fishing is the main economic activity in Habirchara.

From the beginning of January this year some people made public announcements on loudspeakers in Habirchara to warn locals as well as Rohingyas. The announcements were as follows: “People who arrived from Burma and live in villages mixed with local people must leave! Local people who shelter Rohingya must ask them to leave. If they don’t do, they will be punished and prosecuted. Anyone who does not evict Rohingya from their rented houses will be fined and punished!” Such announcements on loudspeakers broadcast almost every day created panic among Rohingya but also fear among local people who had sheltered us for so many years.

My landlord told me that he could no longer shelter my family because, if we did not leave, he might be questioned, fined or perhaps arrested. On 14 January, about 10 Rohingyas were arrested in Habirchara by the Teknaf police and sent to court in Cox’s Bazar. After this drive I decided to leave the area.

However, some Rohingyas in this village working for local boat owners are somehow protected as their boat owners tell the police that they need these Rohingyas people or else their fishing business will be jeopardized. Rohingya fishermen are still living in Habirchara; but people like me, who used to do odd jobs, became unprotected and had to flee the village.

Three days after the arrest of the 10 Rohingyas in Habirchara, I left the village with my family. Initially I could not decide where to go as every place in Teknaf appeared unsafe. Then I learnt that many people were moving to the makeshift camp in Ukhia. I joined them as this camp appeared the safest place in all Cox’s Bazar District.

Surviving in the makeshift camp

I bought a plot to build a hut for 300 Taka from a Forestry villager named Gafur. Since I arrived I have not worked and I used my savings. Only my sons went to the forest to collect firewood that they sold to the refugee camp and here in the makeshift camp. I have almost spent all my savings now and I would like to go out of this camp to find work but I am afraid of being arrested. Some locals watch where the camp residents go. If they see any of us

trying to take the bus towards Cox's Bazar, they demanded 10 Taka as a bribe but then they call the police in Ukhia so that they can stop the bus on the way and arrest the Rohingya travellers. The main problem is how to leave from here safely and not be arrested.

Insecurity in the makeshift camp

I do not feel safe here either. Why do the law enforcement agencies arrest people in Cox's Bazar, Ukhia and Teknaf but not here inside the makeshift camp? Sometimes a strange feeling overwhelms me and I feel scared. Perhaps the Bangladesh government has a plan to gather all Rohingya in one place and then send us back to Burma. I cannot sleep at night and dream that the police come to the camp and take us to the border and hand us over the Burmese authorities...

Something will happen here. If we cannot go out of the camp to work or to the hills to collect firewood, how will people survive here? Except from MSF and ACF, no other humanitarian agencies have come to help us. Some people still have some savings left but soon we will all starve! I already see many children begging and these children were not beggars a couple of weeks ago. When people become hungry they lose control and would do anything to survive. Our future is uncertain and dark. No one on earth can hear our complaints! What did we do to become so insecure? Why does the Bangladesh government hate us?



▪ **Interview # 03 – New arrival from Burma to the makeshift camp**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Sex/Age: Male, 35
Marital status: Married with 4 children
Village of origin in Burma: Aung Seik Pyin village, Maungdaw Township North
Occupation in Burma: Day labourer
Arrival in Bangladesh: 20 December 2009
Flight to the makeshift camp: On arrival
Date and place of interview: 1 February 2010 in Kutupalong makeshift camp
Interview Ref. 10/04-A

I recently fled from Burma. I arrived in Bangladesh on 20 December 2009 with my second wife and my eldest son and we immediately took shelter in the Kutupalong makeshift camp.

My first wife died from various illnesses about 5 years ago. She was the mother of 4 young children. Today, the eldest is only 11. After her death, I had to look after the children alone and, consequently, I could not work properly to support the family.

Three years later, I applied for marriage permission but I waited for one year and the authorization was still not issued. I then married clandestinely a woman from my village according to Muslim traditions – but without official permission. However, I faced a serious dilemma: I could not bring my new wife to my house and she could not take care of my children. Finally my brother and sister-in-law agreed to take look after them so that I could work regularly for our survival. As I could not abandon my new wife, I used to visit her secretly in her parents' house. Then she became pregnant and this came to the notice of her neighbours who immediately informed the Village Chairman. The Chairman called us to go to the NaSaKa camp but we were too afraid. My father-in-law settled the matter by paying 200,000 Kyat to the Chairman who then allowed me to take my wife home.

I also brought my children back home and my new wife accepted them as her own children. I was happy but, within 3 months, my wife and I were summoned to the NaSaKa Sector 4 office in Lake Ya. The Chairman had not kept his promise. I feared to be arrested so I did not go and went into hiding. I asked my wife to return to her parents and asked my brother to take charge of my children again. Three days later the NaSaKa arrested my father-in-law and put pressure on him to produce me to the NaSaKa. I then decided to flee. I gave my house to my brother and took my wife and my eldest child with me. We fled to Bangladesh and went directly to stay in the Kutupalong makeshift camp.

After building a hut, I left my wife with my son in the makeshift camp and went to Duhazari [near Chittagong] to find work. I worked there for about 20 days and saved 1,300 Taka. I was lucky as I returned safely to the makeshift camp without meeting the police.

But now I am stuck here. I would like to return to Duhazari but I cannot go out for fear of arrest. There is no work here except collecting firewood. I made a big mistake and should have brought my family directly to Duhazari but I thought that the makeshift camp was fine and safe because all are Rohingya and a couple of NGOs work here. Now I realise that this place has become a trap. We can enter but we cannot go out! I do not know what will happen here. The situation is getting worse day by day. I will try to flee with my wife and my son to Chittagong.

▪ **Interview # 04 – Repatriated refugee displaced from Teknaf Sub-District**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Sex/Age: Male, 60
Marital status: Married with 6 children
Village of origin in Burma: Alel Chaung Village, Buthidaung Township South
Occupation in Burma: Farmer
Arrival in Bangladesh: Repatriated refugee and fled again in 1997
Residence in Bangladesh: Shamlapur (beach village), Teknaf Sub-District
Occupation in Bangladesh: Fishing labourer/farm labourer
Flight to the makeshift camp: 24 January 2010
Date and place of interview: 1 February 2010 in Kutupalong makeshift camp
Interview Ref. 10/05-A

I first fled to Bangladesh in 1992 and I was forcibly repatriated from the refugee camp in 1994. I stayed for 3 years in my village but as extortion, persecution and restriction of movement increased, I fled again to Bangladesh in 1997 and took shelter in Shamlapur. I built a hut in Burmapara in Shamlapur, paying some money to a local man and worked sometimes as a fishing labourer on various boats or sometimes as a farm labourer in Shamlapur as well as in other areas. I did not have a permanent employer.

In January, in Shamlapur, there were frequent announcements through loudspeakers that all Burmese people should leave the area within three days or the police would arrest them. I became scared and first went to hide in another place like many Rohingyas of Burmapara.

But three days after the loudspeaker announcement, the police arrived in Shamlapur and arrested 40 Rohingyas in our hamlet. Those who work full time as fishermen for local boat owners were soon released because the boat owners paid a bribe to the police. But no one came to release those with no permanent employer and the police sent them to court. I waited to see whether the police would come back and they kept returning in Shamlapur 2 or 3 times a week. So I decided to leave this village, but where to go? All areas in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf are the same and there are no safe places except for the Kutupalong makeshift camp. I walked along the beach with my family to Sonarpara and from there we arrived in the makeshift camp. So far there has not been any police drive inside the camp.

Surviving in the makeshift camp

Since I arrived here more than a week ago I have not worked. I built a hut and used my savings. Here in the camp there is no work and I am not accustomed to go to the hills collecting firewood. I don't know any other work than fishing and farming and I have no courage to travel north beyond Cox's Bazar as I have never been there. Today I heard that the situation in Teknaf has calmed down so I would like to return to Teknaf area and search for a job on a fishing boat. Since Shamlapur is not yet safe I would rather go to Teknaf.

Moreover, I do not feel safe in this camp. We could be attacked any time by local people. Many families in the makeshift camp have young women and unmarried girls. Any incident could take place. I used to feel secure in Shamlapur but this is no longer the case. Here in the camp, the police have not conducted any raid but we cannot go out. How long can we survive without work? What can our families eat if we cannot earn any money? I do not see any future here and I pray that one day Burma will be peaceful and that we will enjoy rights, so that I can return to my own country!

▪ **Interview # 05 – Displaced from the Chittagong Hill Tracts**

Ethnicity/Religion:	Rohingya, Muslim
Sex/Age:	Female, 35
Marital status:	Widow with 4 children
Village of origin in Burma:	Kyein Chaung Village, Maungdaw Township North
Occupation in Burma:	Housewife
Arrival in Bangladesh:	1992
Residence in Bangladesh:	Varimok, Alikadam Subdistrict, Bandarban District
Occupation in Bangladesh:	Labourer in a tobacco farm
Flight to the makeshift camp:	8 January 2010
Date and place of interview:	1 February 2010 in Kutupalong makeshift camp
Interview Ref.	10/06-A

My husband and I fled to Bangladesh during the refugee crisis in 1992 and we lived in the then Duapalong refugee camp. When repatriation started, we fled with our children to Alikadam to avoid being forcibly returned. I have been living there for the last 16 years. My husband died there and we had bought a house with some land. I used to work in a tobacco plantation.

There have been many anti-Rohingya drives in Alikadam but my house and my orchard were valuable and I did not want to leave and abandon them. I used to settle the matter with the local chairman by paying him some bribes. However, this time, when I paid him 2,000 Taka to keep me out of trouble, he assured me that he would guarantee my security but he did not keep his word and I was forced to leave my house to escape arrest.

I decided to come to this makeshift camp when I learnt that raids were taking place in all other areas in Cox's Bazar except here. So I sent my sons to a safer place in Patia near Chittagong where they can work and earn some money and I arrived here with my daughter.

Surviving in the makeshift camp

Since I arrived here I have been going to the hills with my daughter to collect firewood. We keep some for our own use and sell the rest to the registered refugees. My three sons work in Patia but they could not visit me. We talked on the phone and I told them not to come as long as the situation remains tense.

I do not think this camp is safe but so far no one has asked us to leave this place. But living conditions are not good. Many people suffer from the cold weather and many have become hungry as they cannot go out to work for their subsistence. This is inhuman.

I am not afraid for the future because whatever happens will happen not just to me but to all our community. Since we are all in the same situation, we should find a common solution. But it is also true that people cannot live very long in this way.

I wish my sons could stay with me and I hope that the police checkpoint will be withdrawn soon and we will be able to move freely again.