

REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT: ASEAN AND GCC'S APPROACHES TO ROHINGYA CRISIS

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Abstract: *The Article 52 of the UN Charter has stated that local disputes should be settled regionally before referral to the United Nations and that resolution via the Security Council remains an option if regional efforts fail (Nguyen 2006: 463). This implies that one of the key roles of a regional organisation is in crisis management, and only then, peace and stability in that particular region could be maintained and guaranteed. This paper seeks to examine the effectiveness of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) in crisis management. This paper examines the policy behaviours of ASEAN and GCC, as well as individual member state's reactions towards Rohingya crisis. It also seeks to analyse the extent to which the motivations behind these reactions have been profoundly framing the institutional and individual policies on the grim fate of Rohingya people.*

Keywords: *Regional Organization, ASEAN, GCC, Refugee Crisis, Crisis Management*

Introduction

The Article 52 of the UN Charter has stated that local disputes should be settled regionally before referral to the United Nations and that resolution via the Security Council remains an option if regional efforts fail (Nguyen 2006: 463). This implies that one of the key roles of a regional organisation is in crisis management, and only then, peace and stability in that particular region could be maintained and guaranteed. Additionally, as the number and intensity of crisis regionally and internationally are increasing, the role of regional organisations in crisis management has never been more pertinent now than it was then. Indeed, the establishment of the majority regional organisations around the globe has been built upon the objective to maintain peace and stability in the region. This includes that of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC).

ASEAN and GCC are examples of regional bodies, but their approaches and effectiveness in crisis management varies. ASEAN was established in August 1967 to promote

social progress and stability, regional peace and economic development. The preservation of peace and stability in the region, therefore, crucial to enable ASEAN to achieve its aforementioned key objectives. In so doing, ASEAN has been regarded by scholars such as Askandar, Bercovitch, Oishi (2002: 21) as one of the successful regional bodies on the matter concerning the conflict management. However, the grouping of 10 nations was struggling (and still is) to find solutions in tackling the crisis facing the Muslim Rohingya. As a result, the Rohingya refugee crisis has challenged the notion of 'ASEAN centrality' in many ways. This is especially so to find the best possible solutions to the countries involved.

GCC was founded in May 1981 as a direct response to the historic, geographic, economic, cultural, political and strategic realities of the Gulf. Similar to the objectives of the establishment of ASEAN, the GCC was principally designed to protect the stability, security and progress of the region (Quilliam 2003:30). The GCC was formed against the backdrop of a myriad of events in the regional and around the world in the end of the 1970s (Quilliam 2003:30). These included the emergence of the Marxist state in Ethiopia, the downfall of the Shah's regime in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war and oil market developments, to name a few (Alasfoor 2007: 33). The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East today remains in flames. From almost failed states like Yemen and unprecedented growth of ISIS to Iranian nuclear non-proliferation and the very recent diplomatic rifts between Qatar and Saudi, the effectiveness of GCC in crisis management has come under question.

This paper focuses on the role of ASEAN and GCC in promoting and maintaining regional peace and security in the world. It uses the Rohingya refugee crisis as a case study to examine the successes as well as the limitations of ASEAN and GCC in dealing with a crisis that has threatened, and would challenge the peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The paper is divided into two main parts. The first part is focusing on ASEAN's approaches in dealing with the crisis. Among others, this part examines ASEAN's initial response to the refugee crisis, efforts to manage the crisis, before then finally assesses ASEAN's potential to resolve the crisis. The second part focusing on GCC's responses to a tragic incident - the Rohingya crisis - that arises outside its geographical boundary. It examines the stimuli to these responses which are expected to fight for and improve day-to-day survival of Rohingya Muslims.

The examination of these two regional bodies provides insight into how regional bodies can contribute to the maintenance of regional and world peace and security. Furthermore, an examination of the efforts and achievements of ASEAN and GCC in managing the conflict which involves Myanmar's refugees permits the formulation of recommendations on the future role of regional organisations in promoting and maintaining peace and stability both at regional and international levels.

ASEAN and Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar

The Rohingya refugee crisis is not a new issue. Indeed, the issue had been brewing up for quite a few years. Since 1991, the plight of the Rohingya has gained global attention through articles in the media (Jati 2017: 17). The crisis has escalated severely since 2012 (Jati 2017: 17). In May 2015, the crisis has shocked the international community when approximately eight-thousands of Rohingya refugees were stranded at sea for many days because they were not allowed to enter Thailand's and Malaysia's coasts (*BBC News*, 2015). Thus far, ASEAN is yet to provide a concerted effort, let alone to provide solutions to the crisis. Consequently, the refugee crisis is

now a formidable challenge for ASEAN in which its credibility is being put to test (Pitsuwan 2017).

ASEAN's initial response to the crisis

The Rohingya refugees crisis is not a new issue. In fact, the crisis had been brewing quite for some years. It was in 2015, that the crisis has increasingly garnered international attention when thousands of Rohingya refugees were marooned at sea for many days in mid-May 2015. This was due to Malaysia's, Thailand's and Indonesia's initial refusal to take the refugees who had abandoned in water for few days. It was not surprising decision shown by the three countries since the three of them have yet ratified the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (Broderick, 2015). As a result, any policies and practices that make and implement are not necessarily obligatory and compliance are not guaranteed. In addition, as non-signatories, it can be expected that these countries would prioritise their national interests, particularly in domestic and security areas, rather than to prioritise the interest and destiny of refugees.

Malaysia took a punitive measure when dealing with the overflowing 2015 Rohingya refugees who came to Malaysia for two main reasons, first, due to Malaysia close proximity with Myanmar, and second, because Malaysia is a Muslim country. Unfortunately, Malaysia's response was to arrest more than a thousand refugees after arriving at Langkawi Island in mid-May 2015 (BBC 2015). Additionally, Malaysia turned away more than 500 Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshis off the coast of Penang (BBC 2015).

Meanwhile, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wonsuwon made it clear in 2015 that if refugees decided to enter Thai waters, they will be prosecuted by law as illegal immigrants (Sangiam 2015). However, if they decide to continue to a third country, the Thai authorities will provide engine maintenance, fuel, foods, drinks and medicine required to the refugees (Sangiam 2015). These measures were part of Thailand's 'Help on Policy' which involved escorting boats onwards to Malaysia (Matthew & Harley 2014).

Indonesia's initial response was also to turn Rohingya boats towards Malaysia's waters. Fuad Basya, Indonesian military spokesperson, said that, in mid-May, Indonesia pulled back a boat "full of people in dire conditions, smelling bad, some were screaming" (Al Jazeera 2015). Similar to Thailand, the Indonesia's authority also provided the migrants with water, food, medicine and fuel (Al-Jazeera 2015).

Despite punitive measures taken by these three countries, they finally agreed to welcome Rohingya refugees. It was the pressure from national and international communities that changed the approaches taken by these three countries (Jati 2017: 18). The decision was reached following an emergency three party meeting in Malaysia held on 20 May 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The three parties involving Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand resulted in a temporary solution: the Rohingya could be settled for a period of one year.

At the ASEAN level, the initial response towards the refugee crisis from ASEAN was a silence and not instantaneously. It was only two months after the crisis shocked the world – ASEAN held an emergency ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime Concerning Irregular Movement of Persons in Southeast Asia on 2 July 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The objective of the meeting was to find a feasible regional solution for ASEAN member states to collectively deal with this crisis (ASEAN Secretariat 2015). In so doing, the meeting pledged to set up a task force and trust fund to respond to the irregular movement of refugees and migrants

in the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2015). It was suggested that each member country should contribute USD100,000 to the fund, which will be utilised to channel aid to the victims and fund their shelters (Mohd 2015). Singapore became the first country to pledge their support of USD200,000 as a start (Mohd 2015). Majority of ASEAN member states, however, are a bit hesitant to contribute, arguing that they cannot shoulder the burden alone.

From the above review, it can be argued that the initial responses from first, ASEAN as one entity was (and still is), and second, majority of ASEAN member states, were not concerted enough so as to deal with the crisis. Although ASEAN has been successful in establishing a trust fund to respond to the irregular movement of refugees and migrants in the region, but much more can be done. In other words, immediate actions by the ASEAN member states particularly in providing humanitarian assistance through the trust fund has been very helpful for the Rohingya people, but actions and frameworks on dealing with root causes were vague and remain unclear. The next section examines the efforts and approaches from ASEAN and its member states, thus far, after two years of the crisis shocked the international community.

Approaches and Efforts in Crisis Management

As the core regional organisation in the region, it has been argued that ASEAN should take a leading role in resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis (Subedi 2017; Tun 2017). To date, however, there has been no proposed coordinate response from ASEAN to address the crisis (Agonias 2015). Since 1991, ASEAN has not hosted any official meetings to deliberate the Rohingya crisis at institutional level (Jati 2017). It was only in 2012, during a meeting of the heads of state and government of ASEAN, the question of Rohingya issues was raised to high-level representatives from Myanmar and Bangladesh. As such, ASEAN has only focused on providing immediate and temporary relief and calling Special or Ministerial Meetings to discuss the Rohingya refugee crisis, instead of proposing preventive, durable and innovative solutions (Subedi 2017).

ASEAN behaved in the same manner in 2015; ignoring the catastrophic plight of the Rohingya, although it can be seen that there are improvements on the number of meetings conducted to respond to the issue. As of October 2017, it was reported that there were seven meetings conducted at ASEAN levels mainly dealing on Rohingya's community issue in Myanmar (*Bernama* 2017). Until today, however, 'nothing has been done at ASEAN level', told Malaysia foreign minister, Anifah Aman in 2017 (quoted in *Bernama* 2017). Moreover, despite mounting criticism, the Rohingya crisis did not make it on the 2017 ASEAN's summit's official agenda, hosted by the Philippines in April 2017 (Lego 2017). Only four issues mentioned in the 25-page Chairman's statement under the heading regional issues and developments, namely the South China Sea, maritime security and cooperation, the Korean peninsula crisis, and terrorism and extremism. The statement did mention in the implementation of various measures, including the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP), contributions made to Trust Fund to Support Emergency Humanitarian Relief Efforts in the Event of Irregular Movement of Persons in Southeast and a "commitment to addressing the irregular movement of persons in the region" (Lego 2017). The omission on the abuses and violence against Rohingya is not surprising due to the non-interference principle, which ASEAN countries continue to observe. This implies that ASEAN fails to recognise the on-going conflict as a full-scale humanitarian crisis that the regional organisation simply cannot ignore but must be compelled to act on.

There is some positive move, however. ASEAN seems now start to underscore the importance of increased humanitarian access to the affected areas and that assistance be given to the Rohingya, as stated by the statement issued by ASEAN Chairman, currently hosts by the Philippines. The decision to issue Chairman's Statement was taken in a closed meeting held by ASEAN foreign ministers at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on September 23, on the sidelines of the 72nd UN General Assembly (UNGA) (Parera 2017). From the issued statement, ASEAN focuses at the moment is on the humanitarian relief first and foremost. In response, Myanmar has reiterated its commitment to ensuring civilian security in conflict areas, taking swift measures to end atrocities in Rakhine, normalising social and economic conditions, and resolving Rohingya refugee issue (Parera 2017). To date, however, humanitarian resolution to end the deplorable conditions of the Rohingya has barely made progress (Puspitaningtyas 2017).

To further complicate matters, a viable, long-term solution and coordinated response on the root cause to the conflict is yet to be found and planned. The lack of coordinated response from ASEAN as a regional body in dealing with the refugee crisis, and the unprecedented scale of the exodus and the transnational nature of the refugee crisis have forced ASEAN member states to address the potential implication of the crisis (*Bernama* 2017; Singapore Institute of International Affairs 2017). This include the call from then the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, demanding ASEAN member states to take swift action to address the situation (Singapore Institute of International Affairs 2017). As a result, a regional conference was convened in Thailand to address the crisis on 29 May 2015. The conference involved the high-level representatives of countries in the region, which among others, included, Afghanistan, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, India, Indonesia and Malaysia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand 2015). The Myanmar's representative was also presence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand 2015). With Myanmar in attendance, the conference enabled the ASEAN member states to discuss the root cause of the crisis including capacity building of local communities, providing economic incentives that create more jobs, adequate access of people to basic rights and services such as housing, education, and healthcare (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand 2015).

The pressure to act is higher for Malaysia and Indonesia compares to other ASEAN member states. As ASEAN's Muslim majority member states, there is enormous pressure for their political leaders to intervene on the crisis (*Reuters* 2016). Faisal Islam Muhammad Kassim, the President of Rohingya society in Malaysia requested Malaysian government "to (send a) message to the Muslim world and the Western countries, to pressure the Myanmar government to solve this Rohingya issue" (*Reuters* 2016). In Indonesia, there were protests in Indonesia in support of the Rohingya's community demanding other their leaders to 'help Rohingya' (*Reuters* 2016). This included a demonstration which was held outside the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta, on 25 November 2016 (*Reuters* 2016).

The Indonesian government has responding in the manner that its people has wish for. In early September 2017, for example, President Jokowi called a press conference on a Sunday to criticise the violence against the Rohingya (Weng 2017). Indonesian has so far shown its serious concern on the conflict in Rakhine state by sending Indonesian's Foreign Minister, Retno LP Marsudi, to Myanmar in the past few years to discuss Indonesia's position (Halim 2017b). In order to help solve to help solve the crisis, Retno said Indonesia had proposed mid- and long term cooperation agreements with the Myanmar government in the fields of health

and education, among others (Halim 2017b). For example, in January 2017, Indonesian sent 10 containers of goods such as rice, medicine, instant noodles and biscuits for babies for the Rohingya community (Halim 2017b).

Malaysian leaders and government have been vocal, and is expected to continue to speak out against Myanmar on the Rohingya issue. In early December 2016, Malaysian Prime Minister made a statement that the Rohingya's situation was an "insult to Islam" (Lee 2017). The statements from Najib also mentioned that, "We want to tell Aung San Suu Kyi enough is enough!" (quoted in Naidu 2016). Najib Razak's statement with regard to the Rohingya are a reflection of public opinion in Malaysia, and of widespread opinion within the global Islamic community – that the mistreatment of the Rohingya is an insult to Islam, and is an international concern (Lee 2017). Najib Razak also had raised the issue with United States President Donald Trump during his trip to Washington in mid-September 2017 (Weng 2017). The Malaysian Foreign Ministry has also summoned the Myanmar Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur to express displeasure over its treatment of the Rohingya (Weng 2017). Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi made unusual harsh criticism of the Myanmar government at an ASEAN meeting in Manila in early September (Weng 2017).

Malaysia is very adamant to raise the plight of Rohingya refugees issue at the United Nations and Organisations of Islamic Cooperation, and promises that it would not stop looking into all possibilities to stop further escalation of violence against Rohingya Muslims (*Bernama* 2017). The statement demanding Myanmar government to end atrocities being committed against the Rohingya community in the country during his speech at the the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (72nd UNGA) in September 2017 is a case of point. Anifah Aman stated that "clearance operations" of Rohingya ethnics by Myanmar have claimed the lives of countless innocent civilians and caused more than 400,000 Rohingya to flee their homes (Yunus 2017). He added that "Such atrocities have unleashed a full-scale humanitarian crisis that the world simply cannot ignore, but must be compelled to act upon" (quoted in Yunus 2017). In a rare move by a member states of ASEAN, Malaysia has disassociated itself from the statement issued by Philippine Foreign Secretary and current ASEAN chairman Peter Cayetano on the Rohingya issue. The ASEAN's chairman statement issued at the sidelines of the ongoing United Nations General Assembly in New York on Sunday, "expressed concern over the recent developments in Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar", following the August 25 violence where 77 Rohingya Muslims and 12 security forces were killed. Foreign Minister of Malaysia, Anifah Aman, labelled the issued statement as a "misrepresentation of reality", on the basis that the statement omitted "the Rohingyas as one of the affected communities". According to Anifah, "when they do not admit the violence or the atrocities committed against the Rohingya, it is very difficult (to take action). Only when they recognise what had actually happened can we plan and assist in the next course of action" (quoted in, Hamdan 2017).

GCC and Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar

Authoritative voices through condemnation and appeal

At the institutional level, GCC foreign ministers extended considerable dissatisfaction over "the policy of racism and discrimination" against Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar. It went on further by calling the UN Security Council and international community to come up with an immediate solution to the crisis. And it was a common exercise when the call for quick relief and humanitarian assistance to be conferred to the victims was made. All of these points were prescribed in the communique released during the GCC 135th council session meeting in Riyadh

in 2015. The communique, however, did not condemn Myanmar government, nor emphasize the role of ASEAN in the crisis.

In the following year, the GCC repeated its call during a meeting held by the UN Human Right Council. GCC's approach to the crisis deemed to put a slight pressure on Myanmar's government when it agreed with the UN Special Rapporteur's report that requested an abandon of discriminatory policy actions against the Muslims in Rakhine state (ASHARQ AL-AWSAT English, 2017). Although Rohingya crisis is a distant event (beyond GCC countries' geographical setting), the difficulty of Muslims in Rakhine state lays a weighty responsibility for Arab countries.

The suffering of Rohingya victims causes an alarm to the leadership of some Arab Gulf states. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), for instance, has rejected the appalling crimes and criticised the mass killing and violence against Rohingya minority in Rakhine state. In a perception, perhaps, that a call of an individual state to resolve the crisis might not be successful without deliberate actions of the world organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has urged the international community to ease the humanitarian disaster of Rohingya people. The Ministry also calls the United Nations to play its role of seeking humanitarian and political solution to the crisis. This could prevent any forms of violence against and displacement of Rohingya people. Qatar, a wealthy tiny island in the Arab Gulf, condemns the violence against Rohingya minority. It has called Myanmar government to comply with the International Law regarding civilian protection and reconciliation commitment.

Condemnation against crime is not unknown to Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom publicly denounced the violent acts – force evacuation, ethnic cleansing, murder, persecution, rape - against Rohingyas in Myanmar. Soon after criticising the wrongdoings, the Kingdom called the international body to address humanitarian calamity in Western Myanmar. Its fighting for the rights of Rohingyas did not stop at this point. The Kingdom brought Rohingya crisis to the attention of the UN General Secretary. Accordingly, this crisis became an international issue and Myanmar government had been slated with the international condemnation (Arab News, 2017).

As one of the leading countries in the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia has been supporting the issues of Rohingya Muslim at the international level, at least, for seven decades. Since this responsibility was somewhat reflecting the religious call, the Kingdom was a country, including some others, that extended initial support for deliberating Rohingya plight at the UN Human Right Council. Making use the available options at the UN, the Kingdom directed its deep concern to the relevant authority in Myanmar. It criticised the Myanmar government for refusing to give citizenship rights to Rohingyas since 1982.

Saudi Arabia has worked on its political and economic capacity to alleviate the humanitarian disaster of Muslim Rohingyas. Yet, its commitment to this predicament is seen as less deep and strong. A newspaper article published in Times of India contends that the commitment of Saudi Arabia on Rohingya's crisis is not strong enough, though the Kingdom has offered humanitarian aid and released statement that denouncing violent acts. Perhaps, the weak response is driven by the Kingdom's business interest in Southeast Asia (The Times of India, 2017). The 771 kilometer oil pipeline is a critical asset of Arab countries' oil business in

Myanmar. The pipeline which is built at Bengal Bay, of which Rakhine state is located, is transporting Arab and Caucasus' oil to Yunnan province in China. The physical security of the pipeline surely has to rely on Myanmar government. Thus, Bo Kong, a Senior Associate at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, argues such dependency could justify the limited actions of Saudi Arabia: the Kingdom "is less likely to be outspoken" on Rohingya crisis (The Times of India, 2017).

Monarchs, non-governmental organizations (ngos) and individuals

The call of leadership establishment to offer immediate help to mitigate Rohingya's humanitarian consequence was complemented by a generosity of leaders and mutual collaboration with the United Nations agency. In the UAE, the rulers issued directives which called for an emergency aid to displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh (Khaleejtimes.com, 2017). On September 12, 2017, two emergency aid flights left Dubai, delivering aid to 25,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar in south eastern Bangladesh. The Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, sponsored one of the flights which carried \$US237,000 (Dh870,000) worth of urgent relief that was provided by the UNHCR. The other flight shipped \$US735,000 (Dh2.7 million) worth of emergency assistance and chartered by the UNHCR (The National, 2017). On September 26, another aircraft left for Bangladesh, airlifting Dh 1.2 million worth of emergency aid. Additional relief flights are scheduled on 11, 13 and 15 October. The wife of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Princess Haya alHussein, offered US\$384,525 (Dh 1.4 million) worth of aid to more than 13,000 displaced Rohingyas (GulfNews, 2017). The royal family member extended her deep sympathy for Rohingyas through substantial donation.

A varied forms of humanitarian aid and relief were facilitated by the UAE-based institutions and NGOs. Although some agencies exclusively delivered their aid to Rohingyas in Bangladesh, some other agencies extended their support to other locations too. Emirates Red Crescent (ERC) offered humanitarian and relief assistances to displaced Rohingyas. Dubai Cares planned to implement the Education Cannot Wait programme to fleeing Rohingyas in Bangladesh. It would spend \$US500,000 (more than Dh1.8 million) for the programme. The Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation organised Iftra Ramadhan Programme at Masjid Ibnu Mas'ud, Jalan Damai, Kuala Lumpur. The programme was coordinated with the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuala Lumpur. Around 1000 Rohingyas in Malaysia attended the event which was jointly organised with HUMANiTi Malaysia, Geutanyoë Malaysia and Global Rohingya Center (GRC) (Arakan News Agency, 2017).

The UAE is seen as one of "the most generous funding countries" that offers assistance to Rohingyas. By October 3, 2017, the UAE has provided 270 metric tons of aid to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The emergency needs include tents, sleeping maps, solar lamps, kitchen sets, blankets, buckets and jerrycans.

The Qatari humanitarian aid is another source of relief to Rohingya people at two critical locations. Through the means of Qatar-based NGOs and non-state agencies, a success delivery of aid is critically important to the victims who seek shelters at these places. Qatar Charity offered \$US1.4 million (QR 5 million) to Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh and internally displaced in Myanmar. The allocation was mainly for shelter, food and non-food items. It has set up its office in Bangladesh and worked with the United Nations agencies and other international organizations in conducting humanitarian campaign. Qatar Charity collaborated with British Islamic Relief Organization to build 40 emergency shelters for internally displaced

Rohingyas in Myanmar. Around \$US 268 000 [QR 1 million (out of QR 5 million)] was directed for this project. The remaining figure was assigned for food and shelter projects for Rohingyas in Bangladesh (Anon, 2017).

In 2017 efforts to ease humanitarian consequences, the Saudi monarch confers a huge volume of donation, perhaps the largest contribution of Arab Gulf state to Rohingya Muslims. King Salman bin Abdul Aziz extended \$US15 million (Dh55 million) worth of emergency aid to alleviate the unbearable suffering of Rohingyas. When the charitable donation has been allotted, Saudi-based agency employs viable strategies, ensuring optimum distribution of charity to the victims. Close observation on the ground has been also conducted to identify the real needs of people: a special team of King Salman Centre for Relief and Humanitarian Aid (KSRelief) arrived in Bangladesh, assessing the condition of and humanitarian needs required by Rohingyas. Also, on the directives of King Salman, the centre has involved in several programmes of giving aid and relief to Rohingyas, including food baskets to more than 100, 000 Rohingyas during Ramadhan. The centre also worked with the Saudi embassy in Kuala Lumpur, rendering assistance to Rohingyas in Malaysia (Habib Toumi, 2017).

Helping Rohingyas at home could be an enormous value for those in needs. A friendly welcome to migrating people by the highest authority provides an excellent example. The Kingdom is a home for 300,000 Rohingya people who reap the benefit of Saudi initiative of receiving refugees since 1948. Rohingyas from Rakhine state migrated to Makkah and later were given residency status. Such privilege was granted by a great monarch of Saudi Arabia, King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (Arab News, 2017).

The effort of late King Abdullah to accord specific treatment to Burmese society seemed to grant a better life for Rohingya migrants in foreign land. It was an earnest endeavour of the King to exercise the fundamental rights of human beings. For the past four years, the governorate of Makkah launched a program to improve the life of Burmese community by offering them free residency permits for four years. This privilege allowed the community, perhaps only those who resided in Makkah, to access free education, health and employment. More than 250,000 Burmese people joined this program (Arab News, 2017).

It is a pertinent argument whether individual humanitarian assistance is significant or otherwise. But there could be little doubt that such relief is unimportant when the aid has reached at the doorsteps of legitimate targets. For instance, in September 2017, on individual basis, a medical specialist at The Royal Hospital, Dr Rashid Saif Salem al Rubaie and three Omani volunteers visited Rohingyas at Bangladesh's border. Some emergency aid was delivered to the victims (Muscat Daily News, 2017).

G2G coordination

Government-to-government (G2G) joint hands could build a decent living of Rohingyas at a new place. In doing so, Doha would assist Kuala Lumpur in providing humanitarian aid to Rohingya community in Malaysia. The fund which would be directed through Qatar Development Fund (QDF), would be used for humanitarian projects related to the survival of Rohingya people. The projects embraced healthcare, medical treatment, primary school education and skills training. It was expected, through these projects, Rohingyas in Malaysia would have health insurance scheme and possess skills in manufacturing and plantation sectors. Their children could benefit from early and primary schools which adopt Myanmar education

syllabus. Qatar requested Malaysian government to work with Rohingya's NGOs in offering the education service to these children (Thestar.com.my, 2017).

Two ways that offering humanitarian relief to Rohingyas could be always made possible. One is financial ability, the other is coherent strategy. During a visit to Saudi Arabia in 2015, Prime Minister of Malaysia talked to King Salman about the intention of ASEAN to establish humanitarian fund for Rohingya refugees. The Prime Minister received an encouraging response from King Salman who had agreed, in principle, to help Malaysia on this matter (Othman, 2017).

Conclusion

All the indicators and arguments that have been examined in this paper suggest that ASEAN and GCC's institutional responses to Rohingya crisis are not completely unison, except rhetorical statements that have been made by their leaders and some themes discussed below. The statements that condemn the violence in Rakhine state and call for an end to the aggression and brutality against Rohingya people tend to have an identical pattern. No comprehensive and long-term solution has been concluded at ASEAN meetings, let alone GCC meeting which seems to advocate non-interference policy on external affairs. At the individual state level, it is almost certain that a number of ASEAN and GCC member states' government, NGOs and individuals have been offering humanitarian aids to the fleeing Rohingya people. Perhaps, the volume of aid could differentiate the level of their commitment to address the plight of victims.

To deal with Rohingya crisis, the individual policy responses of some ASEAN and GCC countries are rather diverged (note: It is worth to highlight some variations, though comparing these responses are not feasible). Saudi Arabia's policy on Muslim Rohingyas seems to be flexible and could be identified as an open-door approach. The Kingdom has allowed Burmese community to apply for residency permit which relatively ensures their rights for education, health and jobs in the country. Unlike Saudi Arabia, some ASEAN countries are reluctant to offer permanent shelter to Rohingya refugees since they are not the signatories of 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Yet, a genuine appreciation should be extended to ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, which have been grappling with and, at one time, has resorted to short-term remedy in defusing Rohingya refugees' issues.

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