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ARAKAN ARMY: A THREAT TO BANGLADESH’S NATIONAL SECURITY?

Situation Reports By Khandakar Tahmid Rejwan | Published in Geopoliticalmonitor.com on June 12, 2025

Since the launch of the Rakhine version of Operation 1027 in November 2023, the Arakan Army (AA), dubbed the Rakhine Tatmadaw (Rakhine Army), has now taken control of 14 out of 17 townships in Myanmar’s Rakhine State. This has effectively established its dominance in the Rakhine by repelling Myanmar’s Tatmadaw backed State Administration Council (SAC) forces. As of December 2024, the AA had also taken complete control over 271 kilometers of the Myanmar side of the border with Bangladesh, effectively establishing itself as the new neighbor of Dhaka. This spontaneous rise of AA has sparked public debates, especially among Bangladesh’s security planners, practitioners, and scholars, primarily concerning the future of Rohingya refugee repatriation, informal engagement with the AA, and prospects for a humanitarian aid corridor into Rakhine. Before taking crucial policy

decisions on any of the above issues, it is essential to address and analyze the security threats that Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), such as AA, can pose to Bangladesh’s national security.

Arakan Army-Rohingya Tensions

The first core security concern for Bangladesh will be the growing tensions between AA and the Rohingyas. In Rakhine, as per credible evidence provided by various human rights groups, AA has been involved in multiple forms of Rohingya persecution. These include targeted killings of the unarmed Rohingyas, arbitrary detention, and forced displacement from their homes. Since Operation 1027, about 118,000 Rohingyas have newly entered Bangladesh. These Rohingyas have crossed the border in fear for their lives. AA controls all the Myanmar side of the frontier with Bangladesh,

along with the major townships in Northern Rakhine where the Rohingyas are predominantly based. Thus, it is highly likely that these Rohingyas are escaping their homeland in fear of AA’s wrath. This can also be linked to the fact that the Tatmadaw has been battling for its survival. Since the fall of its Western Command in December 2024, no significant garrison has existed alongside Northern Rakhine. Therefore, it is very clear that AA has become the new force to displace these Rohingyas from Rakhine.

There are also valid reasons to attribute the AA’s ethno-nationalist views as a source of ongoing ethnic tension. First, the group’s ideology is rooted in the ‘Arakan Dream,’ which aims to establish an independent and homogeneous Rakhine State through its ultranationalist ideology, ‘Way of Rakhita.’ ...

■Source: geopoliticalmonitor.com

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A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS WORSENER BY FUND CRUNCH



Rohingya refugees headed to Bhasan Char island prepare to board navy vessels from the southeastern port city of Chattogram, Bangladesh on February 15, 2021. © 2021 AP Photo

With the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar showing no signs of ending and the repatriation process in Bangladesh at a standstill, it is concerning that only 19 percent of the fund required for Rohingya refugees this year has been secured even after the passing of five months. Reportedly, a total of \$934 million is needed to support 1.5 million people—1.2 million Rohingya and 300,000 members of the host community—but only \$180 million has been received.

This gap, largely due to the suspension of US funding, will further strain conditions in the camps, making it harder for the refugees to access essential services such as education and healthcare.

Dozens of projects, including those related to health, family planning, nutrition, and education, have already been affected by the cuts. Humanitarian organisations warn that the situation will further deteriorate unless funds are urgently released.

An example of the refugees' shrinking access to healthcare is that the number of general patients seeking treatment in camps dropped from 372,000 in February to 205,000 in April. Many are having to pay for doctors themselves in serious cases, which is not possible for everyone. The funding cut has also severely impacted education, putting the future of 230,000 Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar—and the

livelihoods of hundreds of terminated teachers from the host community—at risk. Since these learning centres also serve as protection spaces for the children, their closure poses serious safety risks.

Moreover, the scarcity of shelter has worsened with the onset of the monsoon rains, which have already damaged many homes. It has become extremely difficult to provide shelter and basic services to the 150,000 Rohingya people who have fled to Bangladesh in recent months. According to a WFP update, 50,000 more may arrive by the end of the year, raising further concerns. Without access to basic services, refugees may flee the camps and embark on risky journeys to foreign lands in desperation. Criminal activities in and around the camps may also increase, and gender-based violence could rise, leaving victims without support or psychological counselling. According to a UN official, there is only enough food to support the Rohingya until October, which is deeply alarming. Access to food, education, and healthcare is a fundamental human right and must not be denied. We urge the international community not to forget the plight of the Rohingya and to come forward with aid.

■ Source: thedailystar.net