The Rohingya Crisis and Regional Insecurity: A Conflict Analysis through Sandole's Three-Pillar Approach

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ABSTRACT

The ethnic cleansing of more than 740,000 Rohingya from Myanmar since 2017 represents one of the most urgent threats to peace and human security in Southeast Asia. This paper applies Dennis Sandole's three-pillar conflict analysis framework to critically examine the drivers, actors, and failed responses surrounding the Rohingya crisis. First, the root causes (pillar one) are traced to structural exclusion, including colonial legacies, Buddhist ethno-nationalism, and the 1982 Citizenship Law, which systematically denies the Rohingya legal identity. Second, the conflict involves (pillar two) complex actor dynamics, including the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw), nationalist political elites, regional governments, and the stateless Rohingya themselves. Third, the absence of effective resolution mechanisms (pillar three) is evident in ASEAN's continued reliance on non-interference and consensus-building, which have proven inadequate in the face of state-sponsored violence. Through qualitative analysis of regional policy statements, UN reports, and diplomatic communications, this study argues that addressing the Rohingya crisis requires a shift from reactive diplomacy toward preventive, justice-based engagement. This paper contributes a theoretical and policy-relevant framework to strengthen ASEAN's regional peace architecture and promote sustainable conflict transformation.

Keywords: *Myanmar, Rohingya, ASEAN, conflict, regional peace*

INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar has faced violence, rejection, and persecution for years, making this case one of the most serious humanitarian and security challenges in Southeast Asia. Since 1962, Myanmar's military government has shown anti-Rohingya racism by refusing to recognize their historical dual culture and pre-independence status in northwestern Myanmar. They claim that Rohingya is a "false term" and label them as foreigners in Myanmar, the country where they were born. In 1982, Myanmar announced the Citizenship Law, which revoked or denied citizenship to the Rohingya group. The Rohingya group also lost their basic rights, which meant they were not given the opportunity to vote in elections, faced travel restrictions, marriage bans, and even a ban on saying the word "Rohingya" in Myanmar, instead calling them "Bengali" or "Muslim" (GOV UK Website, 2023). In 1995, the Rohingya were given Temporary Registration Cards (TRC) and white cards. Although these cards had no legal value, they gave the Rohingya a glimmer of hope that they would be recognized in Myanmar. However, in March 2015, the Rohingya lost their citizenship again when the Myanmar

government declared that the white cards were no longer valid. In 2017, the Rohingya community experienced mass expulsion and violence, with their villages burned to the ground, thousands of families killed and separated, forcing more than 742,000 Rohingya and children to leave Myanmar and seek asylum in Bangladesh. After the mass expulsion, it is estimated that around 600,000 Rohingya remain in Myanmar. This violence not only violated the human rights of the Rohingya community but also threatened regional stability through the continuing flow of refugees and the emergence of diplomatic tensions. This problem stems from the neglect of identity, undemocratic governance, and exclusionary policies that have prolonged the conflict to this day (Samad, 2023). This conflict remains important to study because it threatens human and regional security, which will affect not only Myanmar, but also all countries in the ASEAN region and the world.

ASEAN, as a regional organization, is at the forefront of responding to this crisis. As stated in Article 1(2)(7) of the ASEAN Charter, which states that the purpose of ASEAN is to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, it is ASEAN's obligation to fulfill its commitment to protect the Rohingya group (Limsiritong, 2017). However, ASEAN's involvement is still considered limited due to its non-intervention policy, which prevents ASEAN from facilitating conflict resolution or holding the Myanmar junta directly accountable for the violence experienced by the Rohingya. This non-intervention policy requires ASEAN to respect and not interfere with countries in conflict, so that in this crisis, ASEAN has taken a passive and cautious approach. For example, in 2021, ASEAN decided not to allow Myanmar government representatives to attend the summit in Brunei, but this action was based on unprecedented signs of peace in Myanmar to ease the conflict after the military coup, not specifically aimed at defending the Rohingya group. In the context of the Rohingya crisis, ASEAN has remained involved in efforts to resolve the conflict through the provision of humanitarian aid, but these actions have not been able to bring the conflict to a resolution because they have not addressed the core issues at the root of the problem. Although ASEAN is constrained by its principle of non-intervention, as in previous cases, it should be able to use this opportunity to relax its principle of non-intervention in order to uphold its commitment to protecting human rights (Barber & Teitt, 2020).

Since 2017, the forced displacement of over 740,000 Rohingya from Myanmar has emerged as a pressing threat to peace and human security in Southeast Asia. Many scholars attribute the outbreak of violence to deep-seated structural factors. For instance, colonial-era imposition of ethnic categorization and the 1982 Citizenship Law entrenched Rohingya statelessness by denying them recognition among the 135 "national races" (Ministry of Myanmar-defined categories) and effectively stripping them of legal identity (Minar & Halim, 2021). Similarly, the Citizenship Law has been shown to institutionalize exclusion, laying the foundation for enduring statelessness (Noor, 2025). Concurrently, ethno-religious nationalism, particularly Buddhist ethno-nationalism, has exacerbated exclusion. Scholars highlight how state and non-state actors mobilized Buddhist nationalism to delegitimize Rohingya identity and justify persecution (Wade, 2017) (Zalatnai, 2023).

A growing body of research examines the complex constellation of actors in play. Scholars such as Ware and Laoutides (2019) identify not just the Rohingya and Myanmar military but also nationalist political elites and regional governments as key actors shaping the conflict dynamics. These analyses underscore how layered interests and power configurations impede resolution.

Regional responses have also drawn attention. ASEAN's predominant reliance on non-interference and consensus mechanisms has been criticized for providing insufficient tools to respond to humanitarian disasters like the Rohingya crisis, rendering its response reactive and limited (Limsiritong, 2017) (Barber & Teitt, 2020). Despite these insights, few studies adopt an integrated framework that systematically examines root causes, actor dynamics, and failure of response mechanisms in one coherent analytical structure. Sandole's (1998) Three-Pillar Conflict Analysis, with its holistic lens toward conflict mapping, remains underutilized in the context of the Rohingya crisis.

Although previous studies have examined individual aspects of the Rohingya crisis, such as structural exclusion, ethno-religious violence, and regional inaction, there remains a significant lack of comprehensive analysis that integrates these dimensions within a single, coherent theoretical framework. Most existing literature tends to compartmentalize root causes, actor networks, and policy failures, treating them as isolated components. To date, no study has systematically applied Dennis Sandole's three-pillar approach to demonstrate how structural conditions, behavioral interactions among key actors, and gaps in conflict resolution mechanisms intersect to perpetuate the crisis. This absence highlights a critical conceptual and analytical gap in fully understanding the complex and sustained nature of the conflict.

This research addresses the existing gap by applying Sandole's Three-Pillar Conflict Analysis to the Rohingya crisis. In contrast to previous studies that approach the issue in a fragmented manner, this study offers a systematic integration of structural root causes, the interplay among various actors, and the shortcomings of conflict resolution mechanisms within a single, coherent framework. In doing so, it offers contributions on both theoretical and policy levels. Theoretically, it extends the use of conflict analysis models within Southeast Asian studies. Practically, it highlights the urgency for ASEAN to move beyond reactive humanitarian interventions and to adopt justice-oriented preventive diplomacy. This dual focus, which connects conflict theory with policy application, constitutes the central contribution of this study to the broader field of conflict and security studies.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is well-suited to examining complex socio-political phenomena such as protracted ethnic conflicts and regional responses. Qualitative methods are widely adopted in conflict and peace studies, as they enable researchers to interpret meaning, context, and actor interactions in ways that go beyond what can be captured through numerical data (Creswell, 2014). The research is both exploratory and analytical, aiming to deepen understanding of the structural,

actor-based, and institutional dimensions of the Rohingya crisis by applying Sandole's Three-Pillar Conflict Analysis framework.

The study relies on secondary data, which includes both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of official documents, policy statements, and reports issued by international organizations such as the United Nations, ASEAN, and various human rights institutions. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and credible online publications that provide historical, political, and regional context relevant to the conflict. All materials were selected based on their relevance, reliability, and their contribution to understanding the Rohingya crisis and its implications for regional peace and security.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis and literature review. According to (Bowen, 2009), document analysis is an effective method for interpreting historical, institutional, and policy texts, particularly in cases where direct access to conflict zones or participants is limited. Relevant documents were systematically gathered from academic databases such as JSTOR, SpringerLink, and Taylor & Francis Online, as well as from institutional repositories and the official websites of key organizations. This strategy ensured the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives from academic, policy, and practitioner sources.

The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Materials were examined thematically and organized in accordance with Sandole's Three-Pillar framework, focusing on three core dimensions: the root causes of the conflict, the dynamics among involved actors, and the mechanisms of conflict intervention. This analytical framework guided the coding and interpretation process, allowing for a critical examination of structural and actor-driven factors, as well as the effectiveness of regional responses. The analysis also aimed to identify existing gaps in conflict resolution efforts and to advocate for more preventive and justice-oriented approaches to long-term transformation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Pillar One: The Root Causes

The Rohingya crisis is not a recent conflict. It is the result of decades of structural exclusion rooted in colonial legacies, ethno-religious nationalism, and discriminatory state policies. The Rohingya themselves are a Muslim group that has lived in the Arakan region of Myanmar and Chittagong since the 8th and 9th centuries. In the Rakhine region itself, there are two main Muslim groups, namely the Kaman (Myanmar Muslims), whose citizenship is recognized by the Myanmar government, and the Rohingya (Mohajan H. K., 2018).

During the British colonial period, which began in 1824, they brought many Muslim agricultural workers from Bengal and Chittagong to move to Arakan, Burma. Not only that, but they also brought Indian immigrants to other cities in Burma. As a result, the Burmese population was forced to mix with Hindu and Muslim immigrants. This action by the British colony triggered the emergence of the narrative that the Rohingya were part of the "Indian Muslims" who migrated to Burma (Gelani, 2019). The Rohingya group

itself is different from the Indian Muslim immigrant group because they had already settled there first. In a 1799 record written by Francis Buchanan, it is stated that the Muslim community that had long settled in the Arakan region referred to the area as "Rovingaw" and called themselves "Rooinga," which means the indigenous people of Arakan (Akins, 2018). The British colonists at that time created a "divide and rule" policy to divide the ethnic groups in Burma (Salehin, 2024). Through this policy, they prohibited the practice of Buddhism, which was the religion of the majority of the Burmese people, and chose to support minority groups, one of them the Rohingya. This British action provoked anger and a sense of threat among the majority group, which ultimately led to numerous nationalist riots throughout Burma. The situation escalated during World War II, and anti-Rohingya sentiment grew stronger (Settles, 2020). At that time, the Rohingya group sided with the British and helped them fight against Japan because they were promised an autonomous Muslim national territory. On the other hand, the Arakanese Buddhist group supported Japan. However, after the war, the Rohingya group did not get the autonomous territory as promised but instead caused the Myanmar government to lose trust in them (Gelani, 2019).

After achieving independence in 1948, the British colonial legacy continued. Myanmar decided to adopt ethno-religious nationalism as a form of resistance against colonial policies that favored minority groups. The conflict with the Rohingya stems from Buddhist nationalism, which is characterized by distrust, hatred, and fear of the Rohingya's presence among them (Mohajan H. K., 2018). This Buddhist ultranationalist group has formed an alliance with Myanmar's authoritarian government to legitimize the systematic persecution of the Rohingya, in which case they act as ideological actors who reinforce the structure of ethno-religious exclusivity in Myanmar. Buddhist ultranationalist groups such as the '969' movement and Ma Ba Tha specifically direct their religious chauvinism towards Islam and Muslims. They invoke slogans such as "Burma for the Burmese" and "To be Burmese is to be Buddhist" and describe Muslims as "Mad Dogs" with the aim of expelling the Rohingya from Myanmar (Salehin, 2024). This alliance between Buddhist ultranationalist groups and the Myanmar government also gave form to the 1982 Citizenship Law, which systematically excluded the Rohingya from citizenship. The 1982 citizenship law also provides the legal basis for the mass genocide experienced by the Rohingya group in 2017. On October 8, 1982, Ne Win delivered a public speech explaining the objectives and logic behind the 1982 Citizenship Law. This speech emphasized the division of citizenship into three categories, which were full citizens (citizens included in the 135 recognized ethnic groups who had settled before 1823), associate citizens (citizens who were descendants of colonial settlers and obtained citizenship based on the 1948 law), and naturalized citizens (citizens who lived there before 1948 and fulfilled additional requirements). Ne Win stated that this policy aimed to exclude minority groups from state affairs because their loyalty was doubted. From those three categories of citizenship, Rohingya did not fit into any criteria of each category. The Rohingya thought they were already considered as citizens because they already lived there for more than a thousand years, that's why they are not applying for citizenship.

The 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law effectively revoked the citizenship status of the Rohingya community, leaving them without constitutional protection of their basic rights and legal justice. This lack of legal status prevented them from participating in the political process, including the 1982 and 1986 elections for the People's Assembly. This stateless status makes the Rohingya vulnerable to various forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence. In this context, the Myanmar government has implemented several policies that repressively regulate the personal lives of the Rohingya community. One of the most controversial policies is the restriction on the right to marry, which requires Rohingya couples to seek official permission from state authorities. In addition, a pregnant Rohingya woman is required to undergo strict monitoring of her pregnancy and is prohibited from having more than two children. Breaking this rule can lead to up to 10 years in prison or many fines. As a result of this policy pressure, many Rohingya women are forced to have abortions or hide their pregnancies by staying on boats for months to avoid state sanctions (Samad, 2023). In addition, the government also rejected and replaced many muslim officers and chose to replace them with Buddhists (Hasnat & Ahmad, 2023).

2. Pillar Two: Conflict Actors and Dynamic.

The Rohingya conflict is still going on. It's not just because of structural exclusion, but also because of the complex interactions between domestic and international actors with political, ideological, and military interests. As the dominant actor, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) plays a central role in the violence against the Rohingya. According to Human Rights Watch, the Myanmar military was officially formed in January 1948, shortly after Myanmar gained independence from British colonial rule. Although the Tatmadaw was newly formed at that time, it was involved in several battles. In 2003, with the support of the then ruling government, they carried out thirteen major military operations specifically targeting an ethnolinguistic group, specifically the Rohingya. The military operations faced by the Rohingya group began in 1975, when around 15,000 Rohingya people were forced to flee to Bangladesh to escape violence from the Myanmar military.

One of the largest genocides experienced by the Rohingya group occurred on August 25, 2017. At that time, the Myanmar army carried out a scorched earth campaign against the Rohingya in western Myanmar. This campaign received full support from the Myanmar civilian government, which at that time was led by Aung San Suu Kyi This campaign was a counter-action by the Myanmar military to an attack carried out by the Rohingya military group (ARSA) on the same date, which was used as justification for the attack under the name of "security operations." In the attack, ARSA attacked 30 security force guard posts in western Rakhine, but the Myanmar military countered by attacking the entire western Rakhine region (AMNESTY, 2017). As a result, more than 750,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh and nearly 24,000 Rohingya were killed by the Myanmar military. According to a report by the Ontario International Development Agency (OIDA), 34,000 Rohingya were burned alive and 114,000 others suffered other forms of violence (Sorvar Alan, 2020). These attacks were carried out using heavy weapons such as rifles, landmines, and rocket launchers. Many Rohingya women were

gang raped, sexually abused, and tortured during this campaign. Tragically, even pregnant women and children were targeted for sexual violence. The Myanmar military dragged Myanmar women into nearby forests, schools, and streets, then raped them. In a field study entitled "The Rohingya Genocide," it is explained that rape and sexual violence have been used as instruments of destruction by the Myanmar military in committing genocide and crimes against humanity, with the aim of destroying and eliminating the Rohingya ethnic community as a whole. Thus, the Rohingya were not targeted as individuals, but as members of a group.

In carrying out its violent actions, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) did not operate alone. They also collaborated with Buddhist nationalist groups. The genocide that occurred against the Rohingya in 2017 also involved intervention from Buddhist monks who had successfully formed a political agenda and spread hatred against Muslim groups in Myanmar. The closeness between these two parties began with members of nationalist organizations who politically supported the Myanmar military because it was considered the only force that could protect the race and threat from the presence of Muslims. This support was then exploited by the Myanmar military to support their political interests by exploiting Buddhist identity politics. The involvement of Buddhist groups in politics was triggered by Buddhist monks who considered colonial domination a threat to their religion and culture. This led to the Saya San rebellion in 1930-1933, led by a former monk. This rebellion sparked the birth of a strong spirit of Buddhist nationalist (Bo, 2023). Buddhist nationalist leaders spread anti-Muslim narratives specifically targeting the Rohingya group. These narratives were spread from monastery to monastery and community to community. This has led to the "justification" of violence through misguided religious teachings. Although the core principle of Buddhism is non-violence, the violence against the Rohingya is justified through nationalist ideology. In 2023, the government actively promoted Buddhism by offering money and donations to several monasteries that supported their rule (History Rise, 2025).

In this conflict, the Rohingya are passive actors and structural victims. Their statelessness, restricted mobility, and lack of protection under the law leave them with no opportunity to contribute to domestic politics. In 1995, the Myanmar government began issuing white cards that gave the Rohingya community the opportunity to participate in the political election process in 2010. However, the Myanmar government's rejection of the term "Rohingya" required this minority group to replace and remove the word 'Rohingya' with "Bengali," which does not reflect their historical identity. The white cards for the Rohingya community did not last long. In 2015, the Myanmar government revoked the white cards and replaced them with National Verification Cards (NVC). Although the NVC does not explicitly mention ethnicity or religion, the registration form still requires individuals to state their race and religion, and the word "Rohingya" is still not recognized. In this case, the Rohingya not only lost their right to participate in domestic politics, but were also forced to accept a foreign identity that did not reflect their historical existence (Fortifyrights, 2019). Their maritime mobility in seeking protection in countries of origin and destination is difficult, as this raises serious dilemmas, particularly in terms of fulfilling international

responsibilities to provide fair access to protection and the right to seek asylum (Ullah, 2016) . In the 1951 UN Convention, the word "refugee" is defined as someone who is under threat to their safety, does not have the protection of the law, or does not have citizenship and is outside their country of origin because they are afraid or unable to return. The convention contains various instruments for the protection and treatment of refugees (UNHCR, n.d.). However, most countries in Southeast Asia, which should be the Rohingya group's destination, are refusing to sign this convention. Among the countries in Asia, only the Philippines and Cambodia have signed this convention. However, their geographical location makes it impossible for them to accept Rohingya refugees, so they have no international obligation to deal with the refugee issue . Although Bangladesh did not sign the 1951 Convention, more than one million Rohingya refugees have migrated and are living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi government does comply with the prohibition on returning refugees to their country of origin where their safety is threatened (the principle of non-refoulement), but there are many restrictions, including access to education, mobility, and livelihoods, as Bangladesh's domestic policies increasingly restrict their living space (TBS REPORT, 2022). Other countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, which also did not sign the 1951 convention, only provide temporary protection based on humanitarian concerns. In practice, these countries rely on the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to provide assistance because they do not have a mature refugee protection system (Chuah, 2023). In addressing this conflict, ASEAN and its member states are considered to have failed to fulfill the mandate of the 2008 ASEAN Charter. They have failed to meet their commitment to guarantee and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, including efforts to improve the welfare and quality of life of the ASEAN community through equal access to human development, social justice, and prosperity. Furthermore, ASEAN has not been able to exert meaningful pressure on Myanmar, which has yet to receive sanctions for its treatment of the Rohingya community. As a result, the conflict continues without an adequate resolution (Pudjibudojo, 2019).

3. Pillar Three: Conflict Intervention

To this day, conflict intervention by ASEAN as an international community remains stuck in the conflict management stage. This is because ASEAN intervention is limited by its principle of non-intervention, meaning that ASEAN cannot manage the impact of conflict without addressing its structural roots. This principle of non-intervention is the core foundation of regional relations between ASEAN member states. This principle serves as a regulation to prevent any actions by ASEAN member states that could potentially weaken the authority of the dominant political elite, which could disrupt domestic governance in various countries (Molthof, 2012). However, this principle still shows inconsistency in its application. In several conflicts, ASEAN has intervened in the internal affairs of its members. An example is Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia in the late 1970s, where ASEAN organized international protests against Vietnam's intervention. This inconsistency has led to the perception that the principle of non-interference is flexible and adaptable (Humairoh, 2018). However, in the Rohingya crisis, the principle of non-interference has become the reason why ASEAN has remained "silent". In fact,

when viewed from the institutional position of ASEAN and Myanmar as its member state, ASEAN has a responsibility to take decisive action in preventing further human rights violations and persecution of the Rohingya, and this statement is in line with Article II of the Genocide Convention (Macmillan, 2021). However, in the Rohingya crisis, the principle of non-interference has become the reason why ASEAN has remained "silent". In fact, when viewed from the institutional position of ASEAN and Myanmar as its member state, ASEAN has a responsibility to take decisive action in preventing further human rights violations and persecution of the Rohingya, and this statement is in line with Article II of the Genocide Convention (Oktavian, Jamaludin, & Hossain, 2021).

However, even though ASEAN has the opportunity to pressure Myanmar, fundamental differences between the national cultures, legal systems, and political histories of member states, coupled with the basic principles of ASEAN, also pose a major obstacle. These differences are also the background to Myanmar's rejection of the International Court of Justice's ruling and its commitments in the ASEAN charter. The humanitarian assistance provided by ASEAN member states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand shows that in this conflict, Rohingya refugees are seen as a security burden rather than victims of human rights violations who need protection. The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's Role and Way Forward. The leaked June 2019 ASEAN Preliminary Needs Assessment for repatriation in Rakhine State indicates fundamental weaknesses in ASEAN's approach to conflict resolution. The estimate that the process of repatriating Rohingya refugees to Myanmar could be completed within two years was considered overly optimistic and did not reflect the actual situation on the ground. Amnesty International criticized the report for ignoring the Myanmar military's atrocities, which were the main trigger for the refugee exodus. Human Rights Watch also highlighted that ASEAN failed to identify the root causes of the conflict that must be resolved before repatriation can be carried out safely. ASEAN's inability to devise a strategy based on political realities and human rights violations against the Rohingya further strengthens criticism of the principle of non-interference, which is often used as an excuse to avoid decisive action (Saimum, 2020). This statement highlights ASEAN's serious failure in its approach to conflict resolution.

To address this failure, ASEAN needs strategic measures that go beyond conventional diplomatic approaches and the principle of non-intervention, which has been an obstacle. ASEAN needs to adopt a conflict transformation approach that focuses on structural change and socio-political relations, rather than merely crisis management. This includes the active involvement of civil society, human rights organizations, and the Rohingya diaspora community in the process of regional policy formulation and diplomacy. Furthermore, ASEAN needs to develop a collective platform across member states to share responsibility for handling refugees, including the establishment of regional mechanisms for asylum processing, burden sharing, and legal protection for stateless individuals. ASEAN must also utilize international legal instruments that have been ratified by its member states, such as the Genocide Convention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, as a moral and legal basis to pressure Myanmar to stop structural violence against the Rohingya. By adopting a more progressive,

inclusive, and justice-based approach, ASEAN can restore its regional legitimacy and demonstrate its tangible contribution to resolving the Rohingya crisis.

CONCLUSION

The Rohingya crisis did not arise suddenly, but rather is the accumulation of centuries of systematic discrimination and marginalization. The first pillar asserts that the root of the problem lies in the legacy of British colonialism, which introduced identity politics and segregation, exacerbating inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations. This was exacerbated by post-independence Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar, which culminated in the 1982 Citizenship Law that officially revoked the citizenship rights of the Rohingya and rendered them a stateless group, deprived of access to basic rights such as education, mobility, and religious freedom.

The second pillar shows that this conflict is increasingly complex because it involves many actors, both domestic and international. The Myanmar military (Tatmadaw), with the support of Buddhist nationalist groups and the legitimacy of the civilian government, played a major role in the systematic violence against the Rohingya, including the brutal genocide in 2017. The Rohingya have become collective victims of identity-based violence, which aims to eliminate their social, political, and biological existence. In a position of weakness and without legal status, the Rohingya have no room to fight back politically and can only survive through displacement, which ultimately poses new challenges for host countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

The third pillar highlights the failure of the international community, particularly ASEAN, to substantially address and resolve this crisis. ASEAN's principle of non-intervention, despite being the basis of regional relations, has become a major obstacle in seeking human rights protection and justice for the Rohingya. Although ASEAN has made various humanitarian efforts, its approach remains reactive and managerial, rather than transformative. The reports and needs assessments produced by ASEAN are also considered insensitive to the reality on the ground and ignore the roots of the conflict. This reflects ASEAN's inability to play its role as a regional actor committed to human rights, as mandated in the 2008 ASEAN Charter.

Therefore, resolving the Rohingya crisis requires a paradigm shift from mere conflict management to conflict transformation, highlighting the structural roots of discrimination, the active involvement of Rohingya civil society and diaspora, and the use of international legal instruments such as the Genocide Convention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. ASEAN needs to establish regional mechanisms capable of collectively handling refugees, sharing the burden fairly, and protecting the basic rights of individuals regardless of their citizenship status. Only through an inclusive, fair, and universal human values-based approach can ASEAN strengthen its moral legitimacy and demonstrate a genuine commitment to resolving one of the most tragic humanitarian crises in Southeast Asia this century.

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