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**The United States Response to the Persecution of Rohingya Muslims  
in Burma**

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## **Dedication**

With a light heart and great kindness, I dedicate this work

To my loving parents; Saddek and Messaouda,

To my cheerful brother Bilal,

To the most wonderful sisters in the world;

Salwa, Afaf, Ghania, Romaissa, Khawla and Sara,

A special dedication goes to my second family

Abidat Hamma, Aisha, Ghazela, Nacir, Sabrina and Zaineb,

To my source of energy my husband Tayeb,

To all my dear friends

**Djeddi Amira**

I dedicate this work to

The soul of my father; Ali

To my treasure of life my kind mother; Malika

To my cheerful brothers; Mohamed and Anter

To my dearest sister and my second half; Siham

A special dedication goes to my partner Amira

To my loving friends

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## **Abstract**

Since its independence in 1948 from the UK, Burma (Myanmar) has witnessed an ongoing ethnic crisis and enormous human rights abuses in Northern Rakhine State which led to the displacement of the Rohingya population to neighboring countries, they flee their homes due to persecution and struggle to survive and the number of refugees' increases noticeably every year. This persecuted group also excluded by the Myanmar government and deprived citizenship. Rohingya significant problem is that they are not recognized by the government which claims that they are not indigenous to the country and deprived them of fundamental human rights. Therefore, the humanitarian crisis and the latest human rights abuses which affected the Rohingya come with international response. Although the U.S. intervened peacefully through providing economic sanctions, its economic interests in Burma prioritized preventing Rohingya persecution the conflict still continues to the present day. The current dissertation investigates human rights violation against ethnic minority the Rohingya, and provides a better understanding to the plight of this minority. It also analyses the role of U.S Foreign Policy to protect and promote human rights of the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine. The study applies a qualitative descriptive method to focus on U.S. policy to promote human rights and to overcome human rights abuses in Myanmar. The study also uses the analytical method to analyze the U.S. response to the tragedy of the Rohingya.

## Résumé

Dès qu'elle a eu l'indépendance de la colonisation britannique en (1948)(Burma) Myanmar a connu un grand conflit ethnique continué. Aussi elle a reçu plusieurs abus et des violations sur le plan des droits de l'homme à l'ouest de la wilaya de Rakhine , par conséquence , cette violation résulte une grande immigration de Rohingya vers d'autres pays voisins afin de vivre mais cela a augmenté le nombre des réfugiés significativement chaque année. Cette catégorie opprimée est aussi souffre le manque de droit de la citoyenneté de la part du gouvernement. Le problème réel de Rohingya se résume dans le fait que cette dernière est marginalisée par le gouvernement en déclarant qu'ils ne représentent jamais les citoyens vrais de l'état, ils ne se trouvent nuls sans aucuns droits. Ainsi la crise de l'humanité et la violation des droits de l'homme à Burma a influe négativement Rohingya ; en effet, les états unis a pris ces interventions pour éliminer ce problème pacifiquement en imposant des sanctions afin d'améliorer et protéger les droits de l'homme ainsi pour soumettre un pas vers la démocratie et la paix. Cependant le conflit se continue jusqu'à nos jours. A cet effet notre modeste travail présente généralement et en grosso modo l'effet de ces violations contre cette minimum catégorie en déclarant brièvement une présentation analytique de cette crise, ainsi rendre en compte le rôle initial des états unis pour trouver une solution qui renforce les droits de l'homme chez les Rohingya à Rakhine. Ce modeste travail se base sur l'étude analytique et descriptive afin d'expliquer la politique des états unis et son rôle principale effectivement dans la prévention des droits de l'homme à Burma.

## ملخص

مند استقلالها سنة 1948 من الاستعمار البريطاني بورما(ميانمار) تشهد صراعا عرقيا مستمرا و عدة إساءات شنيعة لحقوق الإنسان غرب ولاية راخين مما تسبب في هجرة الروهينغا إلى بلدان مجاورة, فروا تاركين بيوتهم بسبب الاضطهاد من اجل البقاء على قيد الحياة مما أدى إلى ارتفاع عدد اللاجئين بشكل ملحوظ كل عام. هذه الفئة المضطهدة أيضا مقصية ومحرومة من حق المواطنة من طرف الحكومة الميانمارية. مشكلة الروهينغا الحقيقية هي أنهم غير معترف بهم من قبل الحكومة التي تدعي أنهم ليسو سكان أصليين للدولة كما حرمتهم من الحقوق الإنسانية الأساسية وبالتالي فان الأزمة الإنسانية وانتهاكات حقوق الإنسان الأخيرة في بورما وخاصة منها التي أثرت على الروهينغا أدت إلى تدخلات خارجية. بالرغم من تدخل الولايات المتحدة لإنهاء الوضع المؤسف في إيجاد حل سلمي لاضطهاد الروهينغا المسلمين بفرض عقوبات لضغط الحكومة لتحسين وضع حقوق الإنسان واتخاذ خطوة نحو الديمقراطية والسلم إلا أن الصراع لا زال مستمرا إلى يومنا هذا. بناء على ذلك تعالج المذكرة الحالية انتهاك حقوق الإنسان ضد الأقلية العرقية الروهينغا كما تقدم مفهوما على أزمة هذه الأقلية كما تحلل أيضا دور السياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة من اجل حماية و تعزيز حقوق الإنسان لدى الروهينغا المسلمين في راخين. تنتهج الدراسة أسلوبا وصفيا نوعيا للتركيز على سياسة الولايات المتحدة لتعزيز حقوق الإنسان وإنهاء اضطهادها في ميانمار, كما تعتمد الدراسة أيضا الطريقة التحليلية لتحليل تدخل الولايات المتحدة لماسات الروهينغا.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>AFPFL</b>	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of South East Asian Nations
<b>BSPP</b>	Burmese Socialist Program Party
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>EO</b>	Executive Orders
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IDP</b>	International Displaced Persons
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>ITLOS</b>	International Tribunal for Law of the Sea
<b>JADE</b>	Junta Anti- Democratic Efforts
<b>LDC</b>	Least Developed Country
<b>MEC</b>	Myanmar Economic Corporation
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NLD</b>	National League for Democracy
<b>NSO</b>	National Solidarity Organization
<b>SLORC</b>	State Law and Order Restoration Council
<b>SPDC</b>	State Peace and Development Council
<b>UN</b>	United Nation
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>UMEHI</b>	Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Incorporated
<b>UNCHR</b>	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme

<b>UNTOC</b>	United Nations convention against Transnational Organized Crime
<b>USAID</b>	U.S Agency for International Development
<b>USDA</b>	Union Solidarity and Development Association
<b>USDP</b>	Union Solidarity and Development Party
<b>RC</b>	Revolutionary Council



## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Summary of Sanctions on U.S. Burma

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Map of Burma

Figure 2: Ethnic Distribution in Burma

Figure 3: Displaced Rohingya to neighboring countries.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Résumé.....	IV
ملخص.....	V
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	VI
List of Tables.....	VIII
List of Figures.....	IX
Table of Contents.....	X
Introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter One: United States vital Interests and its Foreign Policy.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. U.S. Foreign Policy: Overview.....	7
1.2. U.S. Role in the World .....	12
1.3. U.S. Role in Protecting Human Rights .....	13
1.4. U.S-Asia Relations.....	18
1.5. U.S. Relations with Burma.....	21
<b>Chapter Two: Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma.....</b>	<b>27</b>
1.1. Historical Background of Burma.....	27
2.2. Ethnic Diversity in Burma.....	31
2.3. The Rohingya-Buddhists Ethnic Conflict.....	33
2.4. The Ongoing Human Rights Abuses of Rohingya.....	36
2.5. Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims.....	40

2.6. Status of the Rohingya Inside and Outside Burma.....	43
<b>Chapter Three: U.S. Response to the Rohingya Crisis in Burma.....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1. U.S. Interests in Burma.....	46
3.2.U.S. Response to Rohingya Human Rights Abuse.....	47
3.3.Obama’s Response to the plight of the Rohingya.....	55
3.4.U.S. Aid to the Rohingya.....	58
3.5.The United Nations Involvement in the Conflict.....	60
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>66</b>



## **Introduction**

War and its aftermath of destruction, disasters, violence and persecution are no longer strange or suspicious because they exist in most parts of the world. Today, however, there is a tragic story of Muslim minority in Rakhine state in Burma a Southeastern Asian country the Rohingya they face pain, suffering and injustice that were not experienced by other people before. Unaccountably, the Rohingya minority group found themselves under colonialism that buried in crimes and violated their rights, persecute them and banned their freedom claiming that they are not indigenous people of Burma.

Since its independence from Britain in 1948, Burma has witnessed a numerous human rights violations, a painful and tragic situation in Rakhine state because of the ethnic conflict that the Rohingya were its victims. Furthermore, The Rohingya now is facing an ethnic cleansing and marginalization by Buddhists with the help of the Myanmar government. At first, the crisis in Burma was not known until it escalated a war break out against the Rohingya minority which led to many killing, torture, burning, and destruction and pushing many of them to flee to neighboring countries to save their lives.

Ethnic conflicts in Burma, most importantly, the Rohingya Muslim crisis which come under a series of events among them the rape of a Buddhist girl by Rohingya men that made Buddhists revenge from the Rohingya in 2012. This incident led to a bloody war between two major ethnic groups, the Buddhists and the Rohingya, however, the Rohingya were subjected to various forms of abuse, persecution, murder and displacement, where the Buddhists robbed their houses and destroyed them with all kinds of violence along with the government which considers them illegal immigrants.

The real problem of the Rohingya minority is that the Myanmar government tried to deprive their identity by denying them their citizenship and banning them to practice their legitimate human rights and this is the real pain when they found themselves stateless and they did not belong to anywhere. Nonetheless, tensions between Buddhist majority and Rohingya minority are still existing and worsening. The Rohingya now are facing persecution and discrimination as a result most of them are either stateless or refugees. The Rohingya are in a very difficult situation, in which they are trapped with no rights and nowhere to go.

Consequently, because of the long period of human rights abuse and persecution of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar, the world has shown a deep concern to the plight. However, due to severe violation there was a criticism from different countries of the world among them the United States. Therefore, as a strong power and a significant leader in the world the U.S. attempted to intervene into the plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar by imposing a series of sanctions targeting the government and pressuring the junta to make a progress in democratic governance, as well as to improve the situation of human rights, peace and implement democracy in the country.

This research will investigate communal violence and persecution of ethnic minorities and their situation in Burma more specifically the Rohingya Muslim minority who were described as the most persecuted minority in the world. This research has also investigated the role of the United States to end the Rohingya ethnic conflict with Buddhist majority in Burma and its response to protect human rights abuse.

The research has questioned this bloody crisis between ethnic groups and the Rohingya Muslims persecution that is still ongoing. Therefore, raising the questions

like what is the truth of what is happening to the Rohingya Muslims especially in recent times which they face injustice, violence, human rights abuse and most importantly the deprivation of their citizenship? And what did the U.S offer as a great power and responsible for preventing conflicts, promoting peace and democracy and protecting human rights from aid or intervention to change the dire situation of the Rohingya? These are the main questions that the study aims at finding answers for.

The significance of the research stems from a communal violence which becomes a serious problem in the world to know an ongoing struggle between Buddhists and Rohingya ethnic groups in Burma. In addition to understanding the situation of the Rohingya that is witnessing persecution and human rights abuse. The research, equally sheds light on the need to understand the role of the U.S. in preventing this crisis and improving the situation of human rights of the Rohingya population especially that the U.S. promotes for peace, democracy and the protection of human rights in the world. Therefore, this is of an extreme importance in light of the Rohingya persecution and U.S. intervention to overcome the plight.

This research is conducted by a descriptive method using the qualitative research. The main method employed in this research is in depth case study which includes understanding the situation of an ethnic conflict and the persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma by using historical approach to trace an overview and an explanation to the phenomenon on one hand. On the other hand the approach seeks to find out a causal explanation of the Rohingya persecution and U.S. role in the plight of the Rohingya.

Many researchers have focused on ethnical and humanitarian issues the world had to deal with. However, over the past few years, there has been a notable growth of



interest in the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine Burma as well as U.S. response to this issue. There are a number of studies that examined the conflict in Burma more specifically Buddhist and Rohingya ethnic crisis and the Rohingya persecution. Also studied U.S. response and role to prevent the conflict, protect minorities, preserve human rights and promote peace and democracy in the country.

Authors such as Rianne ten Veen in his book entitled *Myanmar's Muslims the Oppressed of the Oppressed* a 2005 study had discussed this issue including the history of Rohingya Muslims abuse in Burma starting from 1784, he studied the long history of Rohingya in the country. Besides Martin Smith in his book *State of Strife: the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma*, 2007 in which he wrote about the ethnical diversity in Burma which led to internal conflicts.

A study by Ashley South entitled *Conflict and Displacement in Burma/ Myanmar*. This study examined the phenomenon of displacement in Burma and forced migration by the armed conflict and the violation of human rights. Another title *Ethnic Groups in Burma, Development, Democracy and Human Rights*, a report by Martin Smith that dealt with ethnic crisis in Burma and how it become a matter of worldwide concern and explained the social issue and human rights violation in Burma.

The ongoing violation of the Rohingya Muslims by Buddhists and Myanmar's government has been discussed in several studies such as a thesis by Rachel Blomquist entitled *Ethno-Demographic Dynamics of the Rohingya-Buddhist Conflict*, A (2015) study which defines the long communal clashes between Buddhist majority and Rohingya minority in Rakhine State also explained the relevant forces which come with this conflict. In addition, another study by Linda Crossman 2014 entitled *Myanmar's Rohingya Refugees the Search for Human Security*. This study analyzed

the human rights violations against the Rohingya by Buddhist Rakhines with the central government.

The persecution of the Rohingya Muslims has become a challenge for the U.S. which intervened to end the conflict. This issue has been discussed by Riccardo Marzoli in his 2015 study entitled *The Protection of Human Rights of Rohingya in Myanmar: the Role of the International Community*, which investigates over the conflict of the Rohingya and their human life in the last decades and discussed which role many actors have played in this affair. Many studies tackled the role of the U.S. has played in the conflict of the Rohingya. This has been discussed in 2017 conference entitled *The Rohingya Crisis: U.S. Response to the Tragedy in Burma*, in general, each one of the Committee members showed concern about the situation of the Rohingya.

The scope of this dissertation is organized in three main chapters. The first chapter, entitled "United States Interests and its Foreign Policy" which provides a historical background on the United States foreign policy and its main goals. It also analyses the role of U.S. in the world with focus on its role in protecting human rights as one of its principals, the chapter ends with general overview of U.S. relation with Asia then shift to its relationship with Burma.

The second chapter, entitled "Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma". It thoroughly provides a background of Burma, its ethnic diversity and the reasons upon its ethnic conflicts; it also focuses on the history of the ongoing human rights abuse and the persecution of the Rohingya Muslim population with special focus on the ethnic conflict between Buddhists and Rohingya. Finally, this chapter sheds light on the status of the Rohingya inside and outside Burma.

The last chapter is entitled “U.S. Response to the Rohingya Crisis in Burma”. It focuses on the U.S. response to the Rohingya crisis in Burma, and explains the U.S. interest to this ethnic minority. It also focuses on U.S. sanctions that were imposed on the government and its impact in changing the Rohingya situation and the humanitarian assistance that the U.S. provides the Rohingya with. A special part the chapter focuses on is the president Obama response to the tragedy and then ends with the UN's involvement to the crisis.

## **Chapter One:**

### **United States vital Interests and its Foreign Policy**

The United States becomes one of the greatest powers in the world and its role in the world become greater and become a dominant power by the end of the Second World War. However, the U.S. returned from a long time of isolationism to become a superpower that focuses its interests on economy and politics. It also based its aim to spread the idea of democracy and to achieve global security by determining U.S. foreign policy and play a great role in international affairs.

#### **1.1. U.S. Foreign Policy: Overview**

Foreign policy as a concept has been defined by many scholars in different ways. For instance, George Modelski says that foreign policy is “the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other state and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment” (6-7). By his definition, Modelski means that a foreign policy can be a series of authoritative activities that one state can exerts on another state in order to change its policies and its undesirable aspects also to achieve its interests. On the other hand, Joseph Frankel stated that foreign policy “consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and other” (1). Consequently, foreign policy of any country is based on a set of strategies and methods adopted by a state in its relation with another state.

Federalists and Anti-federalists were the founders of U.S. foreign policy. However, the federalist group led by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and George Washington, this group support the ‘central government’ to manage, equip national

army and manage conflicts, federalists focus their interests on property owners and merchants, and support the constitution and aim to create a powerful national authority. While the Anti-federalist group led by Patrick Henry and George Mason unlike federalists they do not support central government and the national authority because they believe that it may abuse citizen rights but their interests focus on ‘small farmers, shopkeepers and frontiersmen’. These thoughts led to many compromises in the constitution which have impact on domestic and foreign policy (Paterson 6).

For a long time, the U.S. tried to remain separated from the rest of the world. After the Treaty of Paris 1783 U.S. avoided wars that badly affect Europe (C. Morton 96). The President George Washington in a speech warned the people not to interact with alliances that may provoke to enter in wars but to act together only for the reason of trade and economy. In his article, Pat Paterson gives a definition to isolationism in which he says” it refers to an extensive severance of all relations political, economic and diplomatic with foreign nations” scholars use the term isolationism to refer to U.S. limited policies (Paterson 4-5). However, U.S. isolationism was limited only to politics and military but not economy because the country needs trade and commerce to develop its economy as well as to grow. The U.S. has adopted isolationism approach of foreign policy which means remaining apart from the affaires or interests of other nations especially the political affairs.

Following the civil war (1861-1865) the role of the U.S. in the world became sufficiently great (Sharpe et al 590). America has emerged as a super power in the world since the Spanish-American war and during its participation in the First World War in 1917. The U.S. gained settlements in the Caribbean and the pacific after the defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American war. At that time the U.S. has become an imperial power and has adopted a set of policies to preserve its territories and then its

commercial interests spread all over the world, starting with the Open door policy in China. After that the correlation of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe doctrine that officially declares to use military force in order to protect the Western world from European invasions (Clark188). The meantime, the president Roosevelt built the Panama Cannel which would support the U.S. economy; over ten years, the U.S. has expanded its military presence overseas by redefining its national interests which make it has an active role in international affairs (Tucker 279).

During his presidential term, Woodrow Wilson did not only encourage Americans to care about their economic interests, but also called for the need to spread ideas based on democracy abroad. American interventions have shifted from mere efforts to actions especially in Europe and the Western hemisphere during the First World War (Brooks et al 345). The U.S. has seeks to achieve global security through its leadership of international organizations such as the League of Nations. However, the Congress has determined the U.S. foreign policy (Dexbury 60).

The U.S. entered the First World War in April 1917 because of the Germaine's announcement of the submarine warfare (Stewart7). Although, President Wilson's war goal was more than defending maritime interests, in his letter to congress, he said" our object is to vindicate the principals of peace and stressed the need to end the war." (Le Prestre 45). Moreover, Wilson's fourteen points contained general principles for peaceful world. Furthermore, ensuring democracy and peace in the world and preventing violence are the main objectives of U.S. foreign policy ("Historical Timline of U.S. Foreign Policy" 4).

From the Second World War, the U.S. has been the dominant power in the world politics. The continuing instability that took place from the beginning till the end of the

war led the international community to look for stability force. Many international institutions were established during the post-war era and were resident in the U.S. The UN was established to maintain world order and security. Moreover, countries such as: China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom have given themselves the control over the United Nation and created rules regarding trade and monetary policy that became known as the Britton woods system. A short period of international cooperation was blocked by the beginning of the Cold War which became a long-standing conflict between the U.S. a capitalist bloc in the West and the Soviet Union a communist bloc in the East. Both powers sought to spread their ideologies and to strengthen their economy (“Foreign Policy: Key Principals...” 159).

The years 1865 to 1912 was marked by the transformation of the American society and the foreign policy as well as the “industrial complex” and U.S. success from which they announce U.S. as greatest economic power. By 1912, the U.S. becomes one of the greatest navies in the world which make it able to protect the routes of the foreign markets. Nonetheless, it acquired a “powerful presidency” its constitution, Supreme Court and way of chief executive made it more powerful and encouraged U.S. to engage in foreign affairs realm (Zafeberxv). After the defeat of the Soviet Union, the U.S. returned to become the world's superpower. Although there have been many bombings and terrorist attacks against U.S. for instance, the embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998. After two years it was the time for peace and stability for the U.S. (Vadlamudi 103).

From the Second World War, America entered history as the world’s largest sovereign state where all other major powers collapsed. In contrast, the U.S. emerged from the war much stronger than it was before. In addition to, the U.S. economy becomes the world’s largest economy; it has the world’s most powerful naval force

and most powerful weapon in the world. At the time, the US was the first to invent the atomic bomb (Norton et al. 770). In April 1945, President Roosevelt was died and then Truman who was formally his deputy, replaced him. Though, during his seven years as president, Truman reshaped U.S. foreign policy. In March 1947, the former Kansas concrete company passed a joint congressional hearing and proclaimed what became known as “the Truman Doctrine” (“Public Papers of the President” 178-179).

Three months later, his secretary of state, George C. Marshall, unveiled the Marshall plan during his speech in Harvard University; he claimed that the United States played a key role in rebuilding Europe which was damaged by wars. Two years later, Truman signed a treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO. Moreover, Truman’s foreign policy was characterized by a combination of strength and cooperation. The US president was prepared to exercise America’s great power to reshape world affairs, as well as to serve American interests and promote American values. However, he along with his advisors speculated that American power could easily continue with no dissatisfaction if it was an integral part of multilateral institutions. Truman oversaw the creation of much of the infrastructure of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, In addition to, the General Agreement on Tariffs and trade, and the Organization of American States and other organizations (Daalder and Lindsay 9-10).

The Governmental structures, the executive branch and the congress work together to make an effective “decision-making” for the U.S. foreign policy, as well as making it interested or involved in international affairs ( Pickering and Crocker 30). However, setting foreign policy is based on three broad categories: economic, security, and ideological interests. However, the U.S. economic strength is an important factor which led to its success and its important position in the world.



Though, the U.S. ideological and economic interests loaded the history of U.S. foreign policy with ideas and systems that undermined the liberty, democracy and self-determination of others. Through the economic integration, the U.S. also tried to be able to manage the economy, resources and markets around the world (“Foreign Policy Key Principals”...1-2).

The aim of U.S. foreign policy is to establish the idea of unity among the internationalist forces because they were divided, also they aim to make them stronger and organized as an American opinion that has the name of power and disserve the proper role in the world (“foreign policy key Principals”...18). In an article entitled “Imperial Brain Trust” the author stated that President Theodore Roosevelt said “we have no choice, we people of the U.S. as to whether or not we shall play a great part in the world. That has been determined for us by fate, by the much of events. We have to play that part. All that we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill.”(Shoup and Minter 19-20). Thus, to make America accept the idea that it should play the role that deserves also to make them believe that the U.S. is a great power and plays a great role in the world.

## **1.2. U.S. Role in the World**

Since the Second World War, the U.S. role in the world described as one of global leadership and significant engagement in international affairs. Also it was described as the leader of the free world, superpower. After the 1945, the U.S. acquired a sense of wiliness to establish international order as well as to play the role of the leader as a desire to avoid wars and depressions like what they have seen during the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, U.S. role and objective has been to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights (“U.S. Role in the World...”1- 2-3).

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought new believes that the United Nations would be ensure international peace and security under the leadership of the U.S. which remain the single superpower that enjoys the status of the largest economy and the dominant military power, Washington held the responsibility to arrange the New World Order. U.S. involvement in international affairs during the first Gulf War helps revive the UN's role in ensuring international peace and security. However, the responsibility to arrange a New World Order or make it regular with common values of democracy is beyond the sole ability of any international institution or any state. Therefore, U.S. foreign policy implements the ideal values only at the very beginning of the post Cold War era (Heuven 23-27).

Afterward the U.S. adopted a more realistic policy supporting the UN goals and mostly seeking to serve U.S. interests. It is widely believed that a unipolar World has emerged, with that one pole being the United States the single remaining superpower in the post Cold War era in which the U.S. becomes the focus of global affairs because it is the remaining single superpower that has the world's largest national economy and is the only country that could project large quantities of military power anywhere in the world. However, some people rejected the unipolar world as the most likely new model of the international system. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasing wave of global terrorism both constrain U.S. foreign policy making because after the end of the Cold War foreign policy making has entered a new era. The major powers in the post Cold War world order have shifted their foreign policies according to the new situation of the international system (Heuven 23-27).

Politically in Post cold war era, America plays an important role in the world; it provides aid to the poor countries. It also seeks to spread values of democracy and

protection of human rights. Moreover, it has veto power in the UN and it is an active member in many international organizations (“U.S Policy towards Burma...” 5).

American public acquired a sense that the U.S. is a strong power also held believe that the U.S. is the only country capable of making sacrifices to save the world and to face the world's most difficult challenges to maintain its values(Pickering and Chester 29).

### **1.3. U.S. Role in Protecting Human Rights**

For a long time, the historical relation between U.S. foreign policy and human rights has been strong (Hess 213). However, the majority of Americans agrees that human rights are important and should be included as a necessary element in U.S. foreign policy (McFarland and Mathews 308). Jimmy Carter said “Human right is the soul of our foreign policy, because human right is the very soul of our sense of national hood” (Hanckok 46). Besides, Americans held the belief that the human rights which they uphold in U.S. foreign policy are important aspect which needs to be respected and protected.

In the 1960s, human rights values have been emerged in U.S. foreign policy for the first time, after years Jimmy Carter declared that the U.S. absolutely should adopt human rights in its policy. As opposition, Reagan and others from his administration stand against the idea claiming that Carter neglected the U.S. main interests; the white house and the administrations worked to convey their concern to show the importance of human rights as policy and ensure that it would be an essential element of U.S. policy. The debate over the idea remained continuous, Lefever was the first nominee on the Foreign Relations Committee and one among the oppositions, and in 1979 he asserted that including human rights in U.S. foreign policy would not serve the U.S. interests. Jacobo Timerman a newspaper publisher and Lefever's counterpoint claimed

that Carter's policy helped people all around the world. Then the Committee voted in favor to Carter, also then Percy explained her vote against Lefever claiming that human rights policy is a principle of U.S. foreign policy and a political system as well as a factor of democracy (Sewal and Lucas 136-147).

After the Second World War, the U.S. government focuses its interests on promoting people protection, democracy, and extends freedom and prosperity. However, the U.S. established institutions that aim to end wars and conflicts, not only that but also to reduce poverty and protect human rights as well as to grow its economy, among them Britton Woods institution, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. U.S. objective to achieve these goals inherited from generation to generation, not only for its benefit but also for the world. Americans tried hard to unify nations together, make efforts to establish the UN and support organizations and institutions to be under one idea which is to promote democracy, freedom, and security (American Interests and UN...1).

In 1974, a hearing was held by a subcommittee on internal affairs published a report entitled "*Human Rights in Global Community: An Innovation American leadership*" the state of department advocated that human rights become an important priority in U.S. foreign policy (Wilson 309). Moreover, U.S. has been exceptional in its support of human rights protection in the world. It was among the first developed democratic states which makes human rights an important part of its policy (Claude and Weston 389).

From the past, U.S. administrations have made human rights an important part of their foreign policy. Since 1980s, U.S. foreign policy focused on democracy and human rights. Through time the U.S. has been exceptional in its promotion of human

rights in the world, furthermore the declaration of independence stated that “all people are created equal and have certain ‘unalienable rights’. These rights are that no government can change or take away” (Forsythe 3). Human rights policy was originated with congress, persuaded by human rights groups, lawyers, associations and others.

The U.S. plays a key role in international human rights and in UN, as well as regional rights organizations. The U.S. is a permanent member of Security Council and has a veto power over Security Council resolutions which allow it to have an influence on human rights standards (Okhoval 6-7). As an important member of the UN, the U.S. contributed to the drafting of the charter of the UN, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other major human rights treaties on world affairs.

In cooperation with the UN, the U.S. seeks to consolidate values of security, peace and the protection of human rights around the world. Therefore, the U.S. was a pioneer in establishing the UN for the reason that the UN charter was signed in San Francisco in 1945 and the UN has a headquarter in New York City for more than 50 years. In addition to, the president Roosevelt was credited with naming it "the United Nation". The U.S. works with the UN to handle issues such as terrorism, crimes and provides humanitarian assistance through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, World Food Program and others. Likewise, the U.S. is the largest contributor I a variety of UN agencies which helps people around the world as the UNICEF (U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda 13-14). In this context, UN organization aim to maintain international peace and security and solve international social, economic and cultural problems, in addition to promote human rights and develop friendly relations among nations. The U.S. is by far the most effective member on the UN.

Americans have a strong belief that the UN values are honest and fair and it serves people; Americans also believe that it serves development, peace, democracy, and human rights. However, the UN as a universal organization can make changes on the government and intervenes in conflicts in form of money, troops or humanitarian aids where other countries can not react effectively. The UN offers a range of 'Special Expertise' which work to prepare for elections, and help refugees in the world with humanitarian aids. The UN goal is to achieve humanitarian goals, and work for the needs of the world. Though the UN faces many challenges, it enhanced economy and development. However, the UN plays a great role in alleviating suffering for 40% poor of world's population and advanced economic growth, it also provides aids for nations to open markets. The U.S. contributes to the UN to development assistance. In addition to assistance, U.S. objective is to reduce poverty and to achieve growth and development ("American Interests and UN"...3, 9).

The UN takes the burden of international communities to make strategies in order to save people, to prevent killing, genocide, and human rights violation. However, the UN had believed that the U.S. will strongly support its values and that U.S. should call for the UN to hold responsibility to protect people and prevent violation and stop genocide. The U.S. has a great role in protecting human rights and promoting peace and democracy in the world also held responsibility to protect its people, safe them and help them to preserve their human rights. U.S. government believes that 'sovereignty is by the people' and the government's role is to protect its population, and protect their human rights. In such cases the U.S. should call for the UN to assert its responsibility to every sovereign government to protect people from genocide, killing, and human rights abuses. The UN along with its members and institutions

has' resources' to use in urgent cases effectively, or act for humanitarian purpose (American Interests and UN... 28).

Secretary of State John Kerry in April 2013 said" Anywhere that human rights are under threat, the U.S. will proudly stand up, unabashedly, and continue to promote greater freedom, greater openness, and greater opportunity for all people and that means speaking up when those rights are imperil" ("U.S. Government Approach" ...3). The U.S. government takes the state responsibility to protect human rights through the integration of human rights into U.S. law and policies.

John Kerry also said

Countries where strong human rights prevail are countries where people do better economies thrive, rule of law is stronger, governments are more effective and more responsive, and they are countries that lead the world stage and project stability across their regions. Strong respect for human rights isn't merely an indicator that a country is likely doing well. It actually unleashes a country's potential, and it helps to advance growth and progress ("U.S. Government Approach" ...5).

Human rights protection and respect makes countries more strong also indicate the country's stability as well as its growth and development.

Jan Johnstone stated in his article that Koh argues that the U.S. is the only country has the power, and willing to make sacrifices to build, maintain and drive an international law, democracy and the promotion of human rights (818). Therefore, the U.S. is delegated as a great power which sacrifices to create a peaceful world and protect human rights anywhere in the world.

#### **1.4. U.S-Asia Relations**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, South Asia has emerged as an important region serving the U.S. foreign policy. During the Cold War, U.S. used the region as a barrier to stop the spread of communism. Furthermore, due to its strategic location, South Asia becomes an important region for U.S. foreign policy. It includes: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Pakistan which was announced in 2005. The region links the Middle East to South Asia and overlooks the Pacific Ocean. For those reasons, South Asia has taken a great importance in the international politics (Gojree5).

Before the Second World War period, U.S. relations with South Asia were limited to trade such as Tobacco trade. But then, U.S. abandoned its policy of isolation in which the Soviet Union emerged as its rival, South Asia was considered as an important strategic area for U.S. to achieve its military, political and economic goals. The situation changed again in the post war period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the international relations have been changed. After the Cold War, Asia has become increasingly important to U.S. As a result, in 1992 the South Asia Bureau was formed with the support of senate and member of congress in order to focus on the importance of the region. Therefore, the office has coordinated initiatives that have expended America's entry into South Asia. In March 2000, Clinton visited the region and thereafter U.S. policy towards South Asia, India and Pakistan was been reshuffled. Like the previous administrations, Clinton tried to resolve the dispute between India and Pakistan about the Kashmir issue (Gojree 9).

As the world's most powerful nation, America seeks to establish diplomatic relations with all countries in the world, in order to expand and maintain its influence.



Asia's countries are without exception the most important countries for U.S. in which it seeks to consolidate economic and political relations with it and that is due to the global economic status acquired by these States. Since the end of the Second World War, the U.S. has been the regional power in Asia. But now, there are some challenges facing America because of the cultural and historical differences between the Asian countries. The U.S. is working to establish the East Asia community and that become not possible in this case because America has to deal with each country alone and not as a single block (Sung Joo et al. 3-2).

The U.S. is the world's largest energy consumer, followed by China, Japan, India and South Korea respectively. Furthermore, 80% of oil and natural gas passes through Southeast Asia, which increases the importance of its strategic and geographical area as channel, consumer and supplier for U.S. Many Asian countries, suffer from continuing natural disasters such as the Tsunami (2004) in Indonesia and India, the Nargin storm 2008 in Burma, the earthquake in China. In this regard, U.S. has proposed to cooperate with Asia to develop mechanism to deal with these disasters. As a result, this is one of the most important reasons that reflect the relationship between the two parties (SungJoo. et al. 5-6).

Since the beginning of the 21 century, South Asia has become an important region for U.S. because it serves its interests and its foreign policy. Secretary of Defense Mc Namaro said

South Asia has become with combination of circumstance and geography a vital strategic area in the present context between expansionist and non-expansionist power centers. In friendly hands or non-alliance states, South Asia can be a bridge between Europe and the far East and major physical Union" (Stanly 46).

During the Cold War it was used as a barrier to the communist expansion due to its strategic location.

Although, China almost replaced U.S. as the world's most powerful economic power, it recognizes the importance of a good relation with U.S. Furthermore, China seeks to maintain a political and economic ties with the U.S. despite the problems happened in the past such as the drop of the Chinese surveillance plane EP.13. The friendship relation between the two countries is reflected through the mutual visits by the leaders of both sides. Both U.S. and China are trying to show their stable relationship to the world, but in fact as competitive economic grants, each one is concerned about the latter (F. Blanchard and Chen 136-137).

United States policy towards Southeast Asia is related by its regional interests. The region (Southeast Asia) has an important strategic geographical location, because it overlooks the sea that links North Asia to the Western Pacific through the South China Sea to the Indian Strait. For this reason, these areas are important for America to develop its maritime trade (Weatherbee 1).

U.S. relation with Asia is nothing new. Though, it started in 17<sup>th</sup> century when a number of Americans traveled to work in the Indian company in East India. However, if concern and doubt continue between U.S. and China, there may be a confrontation and a fierce competition between them and that threatens the occurrence of another Cold War. The situation has changed when president Obama took office in 2009. He adopted a policy of reassurance towards China rather than a policy of deterrence (Chiwang 2-6). On April 23, 2007, in his speech Obama said "America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America". Obama stated that U.S. cannot meet the challenges of the century without partner and

it needs support. Obama also referred to China as a country which can uphold the U.S. to solve the problems of 21 century (Chiwang 29).

### **1.5. U.S. Relations with Burma**

The post Cold War era was liberated from the constraints of dictatorial rule to democracy, but some countries failed to reach this destination, including Myanmar, which was under the control of the military government. The 2015 elections created openings to change governance that would provide democratic institutions, change politics and economy. However, the National League for Democracy (NLD) elite is demonstrating its willingness to change policy and share power with democratic forces and ethnic minorities in the country. The U.S. has supported the democratic elite even during strict military rule because it has the imperative to promote the development and economy of Burma. Burma's isolation has led to the deterioration of the economy, the stop of trade, modes of transport and political ties with its neighbors. But the current transformation in Burma is trying to tie its economy to other countries and thus to the global economy (Clapp 16-17).

Since the independence of Burma until 1962, relations between the U.S. and Burma were developed but recently underwent transformation. The Burmese regime was civilian with the communist parties and the armed forces. However, in order to prevent the communist, the U.S. recognized Burma's independence and gave it economic aids. The 1988 military coup worsen the relationship, leading to national demonstration. The government was unable to stop demonstrations then the military forces suppressed them. Therefore, in order to restore military power they made a coup and established the Tatmadaw government in 1997, which called the State Law and Order Restoration Council SLORC and then renamed State Peace and

Development Council SPDC. In the 1990 elections, the NLD won and the SPDC refused to give up power and remained in power. The SPDC responded to opponents of the ruling on the leader of the Aung Sun National Association with house arrest and destruction of its local branches (Qingrun 13-14).

From 1988-2008 relations between U.S. and Burma worsened and both ambassadors left the others country. The U.S. condemned the Myanmar government for seeing the SPDC violate human rights. In 2005, Condoleezza Rice described Myanmar as a site of tyranny and Bush called it as an extraordinary threat to the national and political security of the U.S. The U.S. imposed restrictions on government officials for human rights violations and public corruption. The sanctions have also caused problems for both sides. The U.S. has not achieved its goals of regime change and has established 'American Style Democracy' in Myanmar (Qingrun 13-14).

During Obama's inauguration in 2009, the administration reintroduced the U.S. policy with Burma for its role as an enforcer in national affairs, representing that there were only practical ways for the international community. President Obama assert a new policy which based on the pragmatic engagement announced in 2009, he assumed some of the goals that could be more achievable and senior officials insisted that United State's goal had not changed and sought for peace, unity, prosperity and democracy in Burma. The Obama's administration also acknowledged that politics focused on convincing democratic reforms, officials that engaged with Burma will be slow and gradual. Obama's policy placed greater emphasis on the Burmese who decided their political future, as well as encouraging the positive movement in this direction taking Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for reforms in Burma and signing the treaty of friendship and cooperation (Selth 7).

The political relations between the U.S. and Myanmar also characterized by the mutual visits between the two sides, visits to summit and the presence of ambassadors. For instance, the U.S. has the foreign secretary category. Also, Myanmar contains the visits of Aung Sun, who is the prime minister of Myanmar. In fact, the presence of U.S. ambassador in Myanmar has a symbolic meaning as long as the two countries have diplomatic relations (“Burma's Political Prisoners and U.S. Sanctions” 20). Secretary of state John Foster Dulles visited Myanmar for the time in 1955. Secretary Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar in 2011. She met with President Thein Sein who formally represented the military power, and Aung San Suu Kyi, who was seen as a model for spreading principles of Democracy in Myanmar. Barack Obama also mentioned that the Secretary's trip was a part of U.S. policy which aimed at restoring balance in Asia (Burke and Olsen pars 1-4).

In 2012, president Obama visited Rangoon University and expressed the United State's desire to support innovation in Myanmar, saying “I've come to keep my promise and extend the hand of friendship” (“Remarks by President Obama at the University of Yangon” par 9). Then President Thein Sein became the first Burman leader to visit the U.S. since 1966. Obama has expressed his disappointment with Burma's human rights abuses but also he expressed his admiration for the progress he made towards successful democracy over the past two years. Obama's visit to Burma aimed at keeping the country away from China's sphere of influence. He stated that “We have seen credible elections and legislative that is continuing to make strides in more inclusivity and greater representation of all the various ethnic groups in Myanmar”. Obama along with the Burmese president discussed the violence against Muslims in Myanmar and their displacement. The United State's president also stressed the need to stop human rights violation in Myanmar (MacAskill pars 1-13).

In 2014, Secretary John Kerry visited Myanmar to attend several ministerial meetings, such as the ASEAN Summit, in which he said “one of Obama's government priorities is to develop partnership with all ASEAN countries for the relationship of security, economy and humanities and it was an important strategy for the U.S. to make changes” (Wang and Zhu12). John Kerry visited Myanmar after the beginning of the democratic reform in the country. During his next visit in 2016, he met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize winner. Their discussion was focused on the brutal treatment of Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma. However, the meeting between Mr. Kerry and Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was one of Obama's biggest foreign policy experiments to persuade isolated countries and enemies to engage with the U.S. and move gradually towards more democratic governance. The U.S. Myanmar political relations improved after president Obama announced his big policy “Pivot to Asia” (Sanger pars 1-6).

The U.S. has suspended aid programs and has blocked economic trade with Myanmar on the international scene. In the International sphere, the U.S. has exercised its political power to suppress Myanmar's international position, such as its relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nation ASEAN and the European Union EU. Myanmar has been unable to exert political influence and EU has imposed economic sanctions on it including “the arm embargo” and “viva restriction”. In Congress, the Myanmar regime was isolated through amendments and bills (Hadar 16). Since 2011, the relationship has been marked by new changes. After president Thein Sein became a leader, Myanmar's political rights enhanced. In 2012, Myanmar Government amended laws including human rights laws by liberating political prisoners. In exchange for these improvements, the EU suspended most of the sanctions (Hlaing 213).

In 2013, the Burmese President made a working visit to the U.S. where the presidents of both countries met and discussed several issues. At the conference, they shared the current situation and plans for Myanmar's reforms. For example, President Thein Sein revealed some issues like political prisoners and ethnic conflicts. While President Obama talked about problems of Muslim communities (MacAskill par 5,9,11). However, there are still some important sanctions, and Myanmar continues to face economic depression. Moreover, trade and investment levels between Burma and the U.S. were weak. In 2015, the U.S. exports to Myanmar reached 227 million and imports totaled 144 million \$. Myanmar government data show that the total U.S. investment in the billion, Singapore and Hong Kong has 13 billion and 7 billion (Selth 13).

Starting from 1997, the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Burma because of the serious human rights abuses made by the government and its inability to advance towards democracy (“Myanmar Land Ownership” ...247). Over various periods, the U.S. increased sanctions on the military junta and on persons specifically those responsible for human rights attack. Then, the U.S. Myanmar relations were adjusted, economic sanctions were eased and sanctions were revived step by step in 2012 to 2014 (“Office of Foreign Assets Control” 3). Hillary Clinton the U.S. secretary of state said “In recognition of the continued progress toward reform and in response to requests from both government and the opposition, the U.S. is taking the next step in normalizing our commercial relationship.” (“U.S. to Ease Economic Sanctions on Burma” par 3). The restrictions would be eased in response to reform efforts in Burma to improve U.S. and Burma's economic reforms.

Without any doubt, the U.S. is delegated to be a great power in the world and has a vital role in world affairs. The U.S. strongly support values such as democracy,

freedom, promoting peace and prosperity, preventing wars and violence, achieving growth and development and most importantly protecting human rights. Nevertheless, the U.S. interests in the world become sufficiently great by its foreign policy principals the U.S. plays an important role in international affairs aiming to achieve its values and objectives. Therefore, the U.S. held responsibility of international community's also emerged as a dominant power that aims to achieve global security and goals of its foreign policy and seeks to establish relations with all countries in the world in order to expand and maintain its influence.



## **Chapter Two:**

### **Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma**

For decades, the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group living in North Arakan State in Burma has experienced a brutal human rights abuses, persecution and discrimination by Buddhist majority and Burma's military government. The Rohingya are often described as "the world's most persecuted minority". However, Burma government does not consider the Rohingya as citizens and it excluded them from the official list of ethnic groups claiming that the Rohingya are not indigenous to the region which make them banned from fundamental human rights. Today, this process caused the displacement of the majority of the Rohingya to neighboring countries.

#### **2.1. Historical Background of Burma**

Burma occupies a strategic location, where it Faces the Indian Ocean and lies in Southeast Asia (Lee and Nadau127). Bordering two great powers, China in the North and India in the West which make it has the power to give china greater access to the Indian Ocean and from there the oil rich Middle East. It also shares borders with Bangladesh and Laos and Thailand in the East. Its location makes it the focus of interests of major powers in the world ("Time for UN Intervention in Burma..." 5).

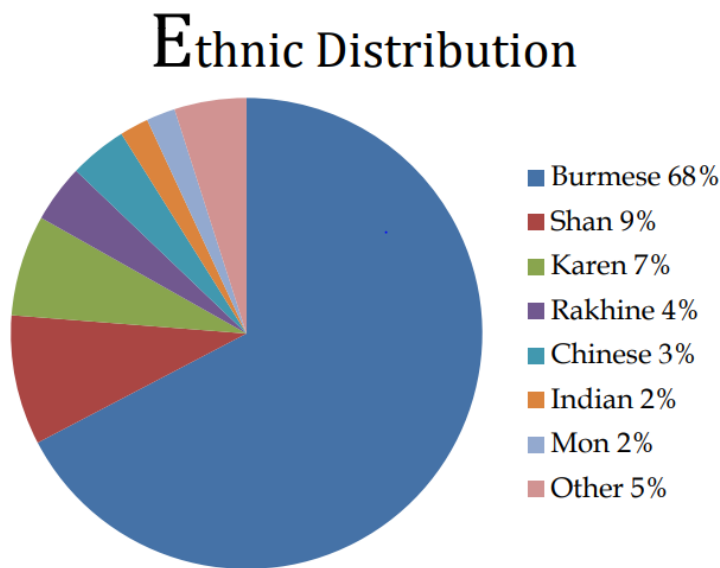
**Figure 1: Map of Burma**



Source: Timeline of International Response to the Situation of the Rohingya and Anti-Muslim Violence in Burma/Myanmar, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, p. 1

Burma is an area of about 678,500 sq Km, whose population is divided into two main races the Rohingya and the Rakhines. It is one of the most multi-ethnic countries in the world, it has many religions, cultures, and races, there are a multiple ethnic groups in Burma among them the Chin, Shan, Kashin, Karen, Kayah, Mon, Pa-o, Palaung, Nago, Lahu, Akha, Wa, Rohingya and Rakhine. The Rakhines' Buddhists' and the Rohingya Muslims are the major ethnic races inhabited in Arakan. According to history, Arakan was ruled by three major sects, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. The Muslims ruled in Arakan approximately for more than 350 years until the Barman's invasion in 1784. Then the British occupied Arakan to make it a part of India. In 1937 Burma separated from India and then it became an independent State in 1948 (Tha chapt 1).

**Figure 2: Ethnic Distribution in Burma**



Source: "Crimes against Humanity the Case of the Rohingya People in Burma". All Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity. The Normn Paterson School of International Affairs, Prepared by: AydinHabibollahi, Hollie McLean, and YalcinDiker. INAF – 5439 Report Presentation.

In 1886, Britain colonized Burma and annexed it as a region of British India. In 1935, Burma was formally separated from India by its government (Charney 5). With the help of the Burmese, the Japanese drove out the British colony during the Second World War because the Japanese promised Burma to achieve independence but they did not keep their promise. Thus, the Burmese set up a nation-wide organization called the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) to remove the Japanese. After the Second World War, Burma again fell under the British control. Many politicians and citizens have joined the AFPFL, because it becomes most popular front. As General Secretary, Gen Aung San has sought through an organization with other ethnic leaders to achieve reconciliation and unity in the country (Smith 44-45).

On February 12, 1947, Aung San Suu Kyi, a group of Burmese leaders and representatives of the border regions signed an agreement called the 'Pang Long Agreement' for independence and unity of the nation which called to end long decades of civil war (Taman et al. 213). Meanwhile Britain promised Burma independence. General Aung San and other cabinet minister's member were assassinated before the constitution was drafted. Six months after the crisis in 1948, Burma gained independence from Britain. In the same year the constitution failed to reverse the importance of the agreement, which was federal in its form but calls for unity in its meaning (Roberts 54).

After its independence, Myanmar has been primarily ruled by an authoritarian military junta or military government. Years of civil conflict and misconduct of the state led the junta to get rid of the elected government in 1962. The military junta controlled all aspects of the country, including the economy, media, and election. It's severe and violent marginalization of ethnic minority populations and human rights abuses of ethnic groups, as well as the repression of political opposition and minority populations led to conflicts ("Documenting Atrocity Crimes" 2).

The general Ne Win took over control of the government and reorganized political system in an authoritarian way abolished the 1947 constitution and changed the regime and came with a new socialist party ("*Myanmar Land Ownership*"... 33). In 1958, Nie Win took restored power to civilian rule. After that he staged a military coup in 1962 and established the 'Revolutionary Council' (RC) which abolished the constitution and ended Burma's democratic period providing the army with confidence by claiming that the army was the main part to save the country (Ricklefs et al. 369).

Consequently, the Rangoon University Student Union Upraised against the military regime, but the military regime brutally suppressed students by blowing up their campus buildings. In 1974 this system changed the constitution and renamed the country to the Socialist Republic of the Union Burma. The General formed the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP), when they seized the country's authority and the military leaders transferred power to themselves as civilians. And the General Ne Win President of the Revolutionary Council becomes the president of the new Socialist Republic in Burma ( "Time for UN Intervention in Burma..." 6-7).

Between 1974 and 1988, the country was ruled by the BSPP by the leader Ne Win. At that time Burma became a poor country and further increasing the country's economic problems. The students at Rangoon University protested against military rule but they were suppressed by the armed forces. After a period, from the 1975 till 1977 students protested against the BSPP, in this uprising the Rangoon University was invaded by the army and killed over 15 students but quickly suppressed by the government. In 1988, the government unrest economic mismanagement and politicians which led to demonstrations during these uprising thousands of demonstrators were killed by security forces. In 1990, for the first time Burma government held free election in which the NLD Aung San SuuKyi party's. In 1997, little changes have been made. On 2006 the military junta moved the capital from Yangon to the new one Naypyidaw meaning' city of the kings' (Countries and Territories of the World 412-413).

## **2.2. Ethnic Diversity in Burma**

Burma is a nation of different ethnicities most of its population is Burmese. The Burmese were the most dominant while the rest of minorities have been neglected and

marginalized during the last decades and were victims of human rights abuse (*Burma Ethnic group* 35). Since its independence from the UK Burma struggles with a long history of migration and ethnic conflicts among its diverse population tensions increased between the Rohingya and Rakhines. The government claimed the Rohingya are migrants and that they are not included in the constitution which led to the marginalization and human rights abuse of the Rohingya ethnic group (*The State of the World's Refugees* 75).

In Burma there are a number of recognized races while others are not recognized. The majority group the Burmans lives in the central region of Myanmar while the rest of the races live in rural villages within the border of the country (Cherry et al 1, 4). According to the Paton report of 1826 the majority are Rakhine 'Buddhists' population represent 60% while the Rohingya 'Musalman' or Muslims are a minority group that represent 30% of the population and claim that Muslims have been identified as Rohingya for many centuries. Buddhists majority has their own identity by which they dominate over the country. However, they do not accept immigrants and consider them as the others, believing that the country is only for them. Also Buddhists claim that the Rohingya Ethnic group are created recently in the region and consider them as invaders (Zarni and Cowley 694).

There was a massive immigration of people from different countries to Burma under the British colonization including labors, traders and administrators, which led to the anger among the Burmese (*The Muslim Rohingya...par* 20). Thus, fear from colonialism has affected Myanmar's history and influenced the Burmese because the British forces encouraged migration to Burma which led to ethnic division. Although these fears had ended with colonialism, the government uses this fear in order to achieve certain goals. This belief against foreigners led to the discrimination against

ethnic minorities among them the Rohingya. To this day, the Burmese consider foreigners in Myanmar as reminders of colonialism and fear that the country will once again be under control (Rohingya Briefing Report 4-5).

### **2.3. The Rohingya-Buddhists Ethnic Conflict**

One of the most troubling problems recently emerged in Myanmar was the division between Buddhist majority and Rohingya Muslims ethnic groups, which has led to inter-communal violence in many areas (A.Clapp 12-13). However, the political unrest in Burma has led to ethnic divisions between Rakhine who are Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya clans. Buddhists have claimed a long history of independence and enjoyed a distinctive Burmese language. The ethnic problems are geographically located on the borders of India, Bangladesh and Burma where Buddhist and Rohingya lie. In 1920, ethnic tensions began to worsen, especially when the Bengali Muslims migrated to Arakan from India. In the Second World War, ethnic tensions increased when nationalist Aung San expelled Indians from Burma. Many Muslims stood with Britain, causing resentment in the Rakhine Nationalist movement and resulted violence between the two communities. Politicians ignored the demands of Buddhists and Muslims in the struggle for independence (*Ethnic Groups in Burma* 54-55).

In 1950 the conflict continues, and in the late 1950 and early 1960 peace agreements were concluded with a number of armed nationalist groups. At that time, Arakan state officially recognized and renamed Rakhine. But this did not stop Buddhists and Muslims from the conflict and this led to the Tatmadaw to make a census of identity cards to target the Muslims. There was no choice for the Rohingya Muslims but to flee to Bangladesh. The Muslim leaders claim that in 1991 a development program was put in place to forcibly remove the Rohingya along the

border. In 1994, some Muslims were allowed to return, while the SLORC prevented Islamist opposition groups from causing the crisis. The SLORC and the Rakhines claimed that Muslims were only illegal immigrants from Eastern Pakistan and Bangladesh, although they were accepted by various governments in Burma, many Rakhine and SLORC refused to use the Rohingya term entirely. This why there is still uncertainty about the number of ethnic groups in Burma to this day (*Ethnic Groups in Burma* 55-56).

People in Myanmar held believe that Myanmar became home to immigrants, also believe that Rohingya ethnic group are indigenious to the region and that what makes Buddhists consider them as a threat to the country. However, The Rohingya has a long history in Myanmar and had recognized ethnic identity and exists in the region before the start of the military rule in 1962. Zarni and Cowly stated that “Rakhine is the ancestral home of the Rohingya” but the Buddhists reject these view claiming that they are immigrants from Bengal and exclude them from the list of recognized ethnic groups, also claim that the term Rohingya created in the 1950 (694).

Despite the stability of the Rohingya in Myanmar for generations and despite their long presence in Bangladesh, the Buddhist majority did not consider the Rohingya Muslims to be indigenious to the region they do not have citizenship in both countries and they have been in poverty and isolation because of the discrimination and violence they suffered from Buddhists. The tensions between Buddhists and Rohingya are due to demographic, ethnic, and economic factors fueled by ignorance and false believe by radicals (A.Clapp 12-13).

Many related violent events led to the violence in Myanmar, starting by the Buddhist women who committed rape and murder by three Muslim men, after that



many Buddhists reacted to that by killing a group of people from Arakan. President Thein Sein gives authority to the military to intervene to the violence. However, the military start violating the Rohingya. As a result over 100.000 Rohingya were' displaced (The Government could...19).

The Myanmar government approved marriage laws and electoral restrictions that sought to marginalize the Rohingya and supported a group of radical Buddhist monks. The UNDP also welcomed their campaigns and the support of monks against the NLD. The NLD had an opportunity to show its support for legal policies and procedures to protect the rights of the Rohingya minority group in the country. Thus, the NLD obtained a large number of elected Christians, Buddhists and Muslims (A.Clapp16-18).

The ongoing violence between Buddhists and Rohingya in Rakhine State was started by the revenge of Buddhists men from Rohingya because of the rape and killing of Buddhist women in 2012, violence spread and carried out against Rohingya minority group, their properties and mosques burned down, many of them killed and others displaced. However, violence continued and increased by security forces that use sexual violence to push the Rohingya to leave the country. As a solution to prevent violence president Thein Sein ordered to send Rohingya to other countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia or to camps. Violence remain continue and the government prevented aids to the Rohingya which make them have no choice only to flee from persecution to ensure their safety, till 2017 most of Rohingya Muslim left Rakhine. In Bangladesh the numbers of refugees reached 300.000 most of them are women (François and Souris 21-30).

## **2.4. The Ongoing Human Rights Abuse of the Rohingya:**

There are many different opinions about who the Rohingya are? And what their origin is? the Rohingya is the name of Muslim Arakanese, as a term Rohingya derived from the old name of Rakhine State 'Rohang', the term means Muslim from Rakhine, But Myanmar government and the majority of people refer to the Rohingya as 'Bengali', which means migrants from Bangladesh. The term Rohingya officially not recognized (Equal Only in Name 6-7).

The Ethnic group Rohingya is a Muslim Minority living in Western Rakhine State, sharing border with Bangladesh. They represent a half of Rakhine's population approximately two million Rohingya (Jonassohn and Solveig 262). The Rohingya practice their own language and religion totally different from the Buddhists. Though Burma is a country of different ethnic groups 135 ethnicities, the Rohingya are excluded from the list of recognized ethnicities by Myanmar's government, claiming that the Rohingya are illegal Bengali immigrants and refute their long history. Despite the fact that the Rohingya were living in the country for long time and etymologically the word Rohingya comes to assert its ties to the region which is divided in two parts 'Rogang' means 'Arakan' and 'gya' means 'from' Myanmar government refused to use the term Rohingya (Albert 1).

Despite their huge number and their long history in Myanmar, Rohingya considered as illegal immigrants and the Myanmar government refused to provide them with citizenship cards (Jonassohn and Solveig 264). From the Second World War the Rohingya suffered violation from the Japanese so they crossed the borders to Bengal seeking safety. From the 1962 their situation become worse and their freedom become more restricted and limited. These minority group faced cruelty from the

military regime, which put them in a hard situation and there is no way for them only to flee to Bangladesh. They were denied of citizenship since the Burmese nationalists enacted as well as banned from any sources of life like education, travel, having more than two children and their land were given to Buddhists. In 2005 the UN tried to send back the Rohingya to the country, but many of them refused to return and choose to remain in Bangladesh fear from Myanmar military government (Ahmed 290).

The Rohingya ongoing human rights violation in Myanmar traced back to the 1948, during Myanmar's independence from the British colonialism (Ahmed 289).

However, Myanmar witnessed ethnic conflicts and political instability. In the 1962, the Burmese army has committed such kinds of violence against the Rohingya minority. Notably, in 1977 and 1992 the army made explosions which created a chronic refugee crisis in neighboring Bangladesh. After two years, the Rohingya forced by the Bangladeshi force to return to Myanmar some of them get limited rights while some are still displaced and others surviving on international aids. The citizenship Act of 1982 abolished the Rohingya Muslims from the list of considered races because of their belief that the Rohingya were not inhabitants of the region but immigrants so they did not have official citizenship they were deprived of their human rights (Abdelkader 343-396).

The country marked the widespread of human rights violations and abuses by its military junta. The regime arrests political leaders and officials without judgment, and this is one of the reasons that caused ethnic minority groups and struggles. Myanmar's government is accused of these violations against Rohingya Muslims which considered as 'ethnic cleansing' because they are facing all kinds of violation such as rape murder, torture, genocide, discrimination and burning their homes (Ahmed 289).

Two laws were violated the rights of the Rohingya have been passed, The Emergency Immigration Act of 1974, which allows citizens to enjoy the national registration card. The Rohingya were denied from this type of citizenship and prevent them to become Myanmar citizens but they enjoyed a degree of citizenship until 1982(American Journal of Islamic...110). However, they faced discrimination and enjoyed some rights, while the 1982 Burmese Citizenship law eliminated the Rohingya completely from three cases of citizenship that has been established, and the government claims that the Rohingya are not indigenous to Burma, but they were immigrants from Bangladesh. Consequently the government did not name or consider them in the official ethnicities list (Lewa pars 1-5).

As a policy targeting the Rohingya, the military government imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement the Rohingya and kept them in northern Arakan where they have no ability to leave which threaten their security, also the maltreatment forces the Rohingya for immigration to neighboring countries. However, in 1978 and 1991, there was a massive flow of immigration into Bangladesh over 250000 had entered to Bangladesh (Song and B. Cook 73). Although Bangladesh is closed the Rohingya camps in 2005, they continued to enter the area because the Burmese government did not close its borders. After a Buddhist women rape and murder by three Rohingya men, tensions were increased. From that time, the Burmese were accused of committing humanitarian crimes against the Rohingya. Then the Rohingya were only able to obtain the white card with limited rights (Rohingya Briefing Report 7-8).

The main cause of the violence was the fear from Muslims to growth and endangers Buddhist's heritage and identity among Buddhists. A Buddhist group called 969 led by monks known for their hostility towards Muslims seeks to build in group

unity among Buddhists and marginalizes Rohingya who claimed that their goal was to protect Buddhists in Myanmar from the Muslim minority. However, Burma entered a religious conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in 2012 which began as revenge of Buddhists from Muslims to the incident of women rape by three Muslim men. Therefore, the victims of violence were children and women also the displacement of Rohingya population (Saiya92).

The Rohingya are subjected to mistreatment by Myanmar's military government and the Buddhist majority group. However, security forces used 'harsh techniques' as a tool of terror in order to remove the Rohingya from the country. The Rohingya suffered brutal oppression and discrimination, Furthermore, this stateless Muslim people committing numerous crimes and harsh treatment including torture, rape of women and children, beating children and killing in front of family, abuses, also they are denied freedom of movement, marriage, jobs as well as from the important access of life and basic needs such as food, light, shelter, water and medical care (Burma 2017 Human Rights Report 4-5).

In addition to violence and abuses of human rights, authorities deny citizens their liberty to express opinion freely. However, many journalists arrested and imprisoned for expressing their political opinion and criticizing the government. Compared to 2016 freedom of expression and press were restricted. Citizens were prohibited to pass any political information electronically to media. Despite the ban and the restrictions media remain active in Rakhine State. Many reporters and media executives were fired because they express and print country criticize to Rakhine military acts. Nevertheless, the Rohingya Muslim population in Northern Rakhine State was denied from movement and to carry documents to travel only if the person had the registration card (Burma 2017 Human Rights Report 20-28).

## **2.5. Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims**

The International Community considers the Rohingya' one of the most persecuted group in the world' they are the only group that banned from their human rights and subjected to violation the Citizenship Act of 1982 is designed to diminish the Rohingya as an ethnic group by implementing restrictions and discrimination and laws that prohibit the Rohingya from their rights. This process encourages the Rakhines to discrimination and violation against Rohingya for the purpose of destroying the existence of the Rohingya (Who are the Rohingya? pars 15- 18).

During the 1978, an operation known as' Nagamin' designed by the Government aim to eliminate the illegal foreigners living in the border regions in Burma. This policy accuses the Rohingya of being citizens because the government considers them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and enforces them to return to their land. Therefore, this process led to violence against the Rohingya and the widespread of terror among Buddhists and forced the Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. Meantime, over 250000 Rohingya sought refuge (The State of the World's Refugees 75). Nagamin operation is a process of ethnic cleansing and violence that aim to destroy and erase the Rohingya ethnic group from Myanmar.

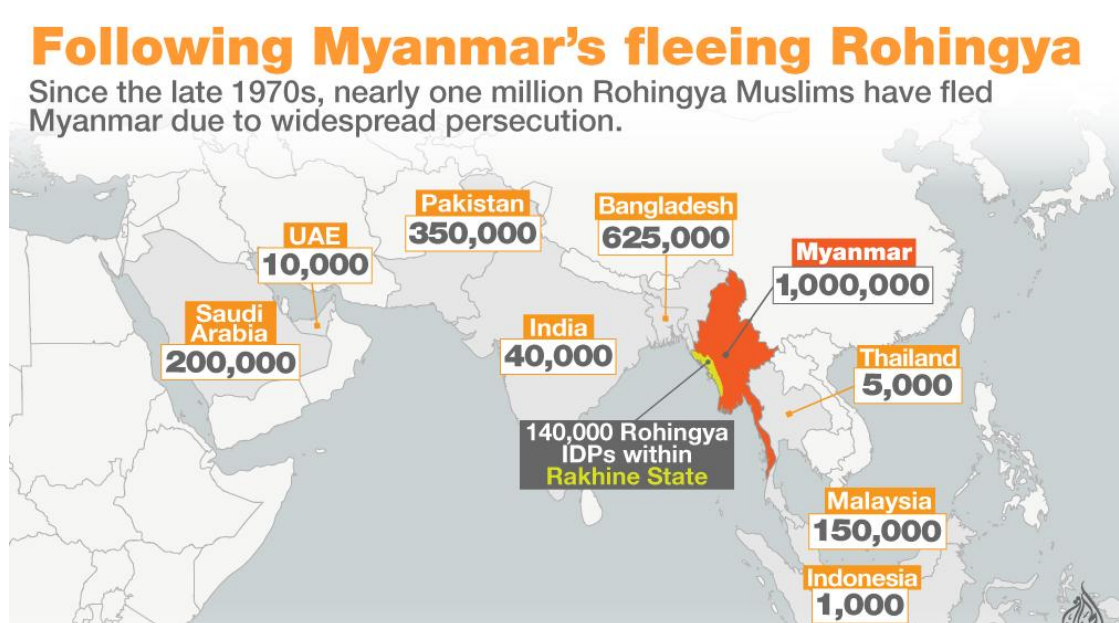
Violation against Rohingya ethnic group and' erasing their identity' and destroying them, started by the beginning of the military rule, anti-Muslims nationalists from Buddhist group aim to eliminate the Rohingya from the region. However, they denied the rights of Rohingya as citizens, the 1978 operation objective is to target the Rohingya and separate them by the ban of their rights. In order to destroy the Rohingya, the Brumes authority tends to use the 'genocidal acts' which push them to move from the country. The Rohingya flee the country because of the violence they

suffered from the Buddhists majority, over 800000 Rohingya leave the country fleeing to neighboring countries. In 2012 over 140000 of Rohingya find themselves living in campus for National Displaced Persons (IDP) where they live in poverty overall they are facing discrimination and human rights violations (Zarni and Cowely 702-706).

Since the 1970s, many of the Rohingya have experienced forced migration into neighboring countries such as Bangladesh and other parts of Asia also they had experienced brutal human rights violation. The growing violence against the Rohingya including killing, rape, arrests, and forced displacement indicate that the Burmese aim was not only to remove the Rohingya but to destroy their ethnic, religious identity (Ranjan 27). The state of Department is calling attacks in Burma against Rohingya Muslims 'ethnic cleansing'. The Rohingya Muslims in Burma who are minority ethnic group are facing persecution, discrimination, torture and violence by the Burmese authorities (The State Department Labeled Violence in Burma...).

The displacement of the Rohingya started during the 1978 crackdown when 200000 of Rohingya population fled to Bangladesh. This incident occurred when the authority target the Rohingya and stripped them from citizenship and deny the refugees to return to Myanmar, the authority did not only recognize the Rohingya as one of its 135 ethnic groups also it excluded the Rohingya new born from obtaining citizenship. Anti-Muslims in Myanmar protested against migrants targeting the Rohingya which intensified violence in 2012 and increased a difficult situation for the Rohingya also the regime restricted their freedom (Knuters 21).

**Figure 3: Displaced Rohingya to Neighboring Countries.**



Source: Aljazeera and Agencies Last Updated 2017. See: <https://www.google.com/search?q=number+of+displaced+rohingya+since+1991+diag+ram>.

The Rohingya ethnic cleansing is persisting. During his visit to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, Andrew Gilmour UN assistant secretary general for human rights said” the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya from Myanmar continues (Rohingya ethnic cleansing... pars 1-3). Ethnic Cleansing targeting Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar has not stopped despite growing condemnation from the international community, the Trump administration said:” the U.S. report estimated that approximately 680.000 people left Myanmar to Bangladesh escaping from Burmese brutality (Lederman pars 1, 3).

Secretary of state Rese Tillerson said in a statement" provocation justifies the horrendous atrocities that have ensued". The heartless crimes committed by the Burmese police and military are terrible which includes, rape, killing, genocide, displacement...in this regard, the Human Rights Watch accused Myanmar security forces of carrying out widespread rapes against women and girls as part of an



ethnic cleansing campaign against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state (Ching pars 7, 9).

In a 37 page report, the organization documented the witness of the survivors of the mass rape of Rohingya women by the Myanmar soldiers, as well as cruelty and humiliation. Many women described the deaths of their young children, their husbands and fathers and the burning of their houses. The report which is titled "All of my Body was Pain: The Sexual Violence against Rohingya Women and Girls in Burma". The victims spoke about their suffering and immigration to Bangladesh despite the physical pain. Human Rights Watch reported that it had spoken to 52 Rohingya women and girls who had flee to Bangladesh where 29 of them said they had been raped (1-4).

The U.S. government denounced the criminal acts committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya minorities. On September 20, 2017 at the UN peacekeeping meeting, Vice president Mike Pines Balochi described what is happening in Burma as 'Brutality' saying that the images of violence and its victims have shocked the American people and all the people around the world (Remarks by the vice president pars 43-44).

## **2.6. Status of the Rohingya Inside and Outside Burma**

"The UN calls the Rohingya as the most persecuted minorities in the world." The Rohingya people became stateless because the government excludes them from citizenship act of 1948. While the citizenship law in 1982 strict them of access to full citizenship. They are residents with temporary cards and have few limited rights, the Rohingya are excluded and not considered as citizens by Buddhist majority or by the government as a result they are not Burmese citizens, they are rejected and enable to

enjoy human rights also banned to vote. Nevertheless, the government announces severe restrictions for the Rohingya as marriage family planning, employment, education, religious choice and freedom of movement (Ahmed289). Most of the Rohingya Muslims inside Myanmar are living without nationality as a result they are considered stateless, and the process of abusing their rights is ongoing. Yet they are denied from citizenship automatically means that they are denied to enjoy human rights (Equal Only in Name 8).

In a nutshell, inside Myanmar the Rohingya are stateless because the government refuses to grant their status, many of them live without any official documentation. However, the government introduced the citizenship law of 1982 which provide limited access to the Rohingya and provide them temporary cards 'white cards' which offer limited rights. The Rohingya were banned to participate in the election or to vote, but in 2008 and 2010 they were allowed to vote to Myanmar's constitutional referendum and the general election. The result of the 2015 election was not in favor of the Rohingya candidates (Albert 2).

In a report, House of Commons International Development Committee stated that the International Rescue Committee (IRC) shows that Bangladesh government will not recognize the Rohingya as refugees and limits their rights under the International Refugee Law. The IRC also argued that the Rohingya are facing problems if Bangladesh do not consider them as refugees and Burma do not give them the citizenship claiming whether to 'stay in camps in Bangladesh in dire conditions, or return to Burma with uncertain, but currently very limited, protection'. In the light of this, the Rohingya situation clarified, they are living without identity inside and outside the country and certainly in a brutal situation (Bangladesh and Burma... 26).

In a report, the writer stated that the UN Assistant General Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung Hwa Kang describe the Rohingya Situation saying” I witnessed a level of human suffering in IDP camps that I have personally never seen before with men, women, and children living in appalling conditions with severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, both in camps and isolated villages...” In fact, the Rohingya are neglected, marginalized, and live in poverty (Understanding and Responding to the Rohingya Crisis par 2). Other Report highlighted that the Rohingya live with few possessions and without access to basic services such as health care, water, and lightning, and the majority is obliged to live in camps in severe weather with catastrophic results (Wake and Yu 3).

Ethnic violence and breach of human rights in the world is a serious humanitarian problem. The persecution of the Rohingya Muslims ethnic group Northern Rakhine state in Burma is a complex tragedy and tensions in Burma are increasing day after day where the Rohingya issue is going to be much worse. Although, Burma is a multi ethnic region where the Rohingya ethnic minority are not recognized by the government and excluded from the list of ethnic groups which makes them marginalized, persecuted and mistreated by Buddhist majority with the help of the government and they experienced all kinds of violence which led to Rohingya displacement. They even have been the most persecuted minority in order to remove them from the country. The ongoing human rights violation makes the Rohingya ethnic group rendered stateless or refugees seeking safety in neighboring countries.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **U.S. Response to the Rohingya Crisis in Burma**

In recent years, the Rohingya crisis in Burma has become one of the most important humanitarian problems in the world. Although the plight of the Rohingya is complex, serious and ongoing, it has been ignored by the world at first. Then, recent human rights violence, discrimination and persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in Burma especially Rohingya Muslims in Northern Rakhine State come with international attention. However, the U.S. as a world's most super power and a responsible of human rights protection, the U.S expressed concern about discrimination and violence against the Rohingya. Nonetheless, during the Obama's administration the U.S. calls to stop persecuting of the Rohingya. In addition to, the U.S. peacefully exerts some pressure on the government presented in sanctions and some restrictions in order to prevent persecution and human rights violation. Although, the U.S stance in the Rohingya issue was not strong enough because it culminates the situation but not overcome the plight.

#### **3.1. U.S. Interests in Burma**

Until 1988, the U.S. foreign policy did little more than recognize Burma's existence, partly because of Burmese government's inward looking policies and partly America's preoccupation with conflicts in other Asian countries Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines. After 1988, U.S. interests in Burma grew rapidly. It quickly focused on regime change following the SLORC's and the election of 1988 of Aung San Suu Kyi (Rieffel 5). After that, the Burmese military forces crushed the cities that support democracy. Then, the president Ronald Reagan stopped the U.S. aid program in Burma, imposed an arms embargo and a series of economic sanctions

continued even during the next three presidential terms (U.S. Sanctions on Burma 4). After Aung San gained elections, the U.S. tied its relation with Burma as it did not before in order to change its authoritative regime to a democratic one, also to spread its ideologies of peace and freedom to end conflicts and human rights violation.

Since the 1988 crackdown the U.S. has been one of the critics of Myanmar military junta. The U.S. did not only provide assistance for the country rather it appoints its ambassador. The U.S. also imposed sanctions that targeted the regime aiming to pressure the junta to improve human rights and to change its political direction into democratization (Sidhu and Parnini 12).

In his report Michael F. Martin said” for many years, Congress and the executive branch have in general shared a common view on the broader goals of U.S. policy in Burma the establishment of a democratically elected civilian government that respects the human rights of its people and promotes the peace and prosperity of the Nation. Also he stated that Scot Marciel, U.S. ambassador to Burma in a press interview on 2016 said" But our goal, the United States goal, remains the same: we want to see a peaceful, prosperous, democratic Myanmar, One whose people live in harmony and enjoy full right"( *U.S. Restrictions on Relations with Burma*9). The U.S. foreign policy towards Burma focused on making a democratic reform in the country. Furthermore, the U.S. always seeks to promote peace, and prosperity which make the U.S. react to the situation of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar peacefully.

### **3.2. U.S. Response to Rohingya Human Rights Abuse**

No matter how different races, ethnicities, religions and languages no matter how societies differ, all people have rights that must be respected and should not be attacked or denied by anyone. “Human rights represent rights to which all human

beings are entitled because of their humanity and not because of their social status or individual merit” (Abdul and El-Fatihqtd in Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya Crisis 56). Andrew Selth also said" the U.S. is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world also prevent human rights violation and discrimination"(13). The U.S. held the world's responsibility to protect human rights and preventing crimes and violence around the world also it held responsibility to react in danger cases in other countries. There was an international response to the human rights abuse of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma. Their issue gradually gained attention from international community and become an international and Regional concern, most importantly for the U.S.

The U.S. considered the principal founder of the UN organization since the 1945, in which it takes a part in several issues along with the UN. However, the U.S. has an essential role to promote peace, prevent wars and maintain democratic values in cases the state failed to control critical situations also the U.S. is delegated to meet the world's challenges (Zabilanska 14). Nonetheless, The U.S. has been the largest and the effective contributor to the UN in the protection and promotion of freedom and democracy in the world. The U.S. government relates its ties with the UN to uphold its responsibility in protecting its citizens. The U.S. also coordinates its competence with the UN to support the establishment of Human rights council in order to uphold and promote human rights values (American Interests and UN Reform 7-8).

During a meeting initiated by Saudi Arabia, which called for ending violence against Rohingya Muslim in Burma, the General assembly asked to vote to the idea of looking for a peaceful solution to ‘end all violence against Rohingya and for humanitarian organizations to be granted access to the region’. Only the U.S. UK and France and major Muslim countries voted in favor, while other countries such as

China and Russia refused the idea (Mulken 13). The ongoing human rights abuses committed by Burma's military government against Rohingya ethnic group provoked a real anger in many countries around the world that shared their sympathy for the Rohingya and demanded a peaceful solution to end their suffering. The U.S. was always known for its support to freedom's principles, promoting peace and democracy as well as protecting human rights (Schoenbaum 251).

In response to the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar which committed by the military and the Buddhists, as a strong contributor in human rights protection the U.S. put pressure on Burma by using economic and diplomatic strategies in order to improve its policies towards ethnic groups that suffer persecution especially the Rohingya minority group. Though, the U.S. and Myanmar relations was close after Myanmar's independence, the relationship changed and strained after a peaceful protest in 1988 known as 'the 8888 Uprising'. In addition to, the Burma's military government was convicted by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Furthermore, Regan's administration continued its democratic reforms on the country (Dasguptapar 2). The U.S. main objective from diplomatic and economic strategies is to try to end ethnic crisis in Burma gently by promoting the idea of peace, freedom and human rights that was always its interest and main goal to promote in the world.

In 2017, Rex Tillerson U.S. Secretary of State, expressed his focus in promoting democracy in Myanmar also he called "for an independent inquiry on the causes of the crisis and crimes, arguing that more information was needed to describe the situation as ethnic cleansing" (François and Souris 53). The Rohingya population are not only excluded from citizenship, also they lack religious freedom, the 969 an organization of Buddhist activist known for their hostility from Islam, wanted to exclude the Rohingya even socially and economically and ban the Rohingya from

practicing their religion right freely. Thus the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom in 2012 urges the government for the freedom of religion of the Rohingya and calls them as 'persecuted Muslims'. Also many Journalists and academics depend on religious persecution in order to describe the situation of the Rohingya minority (Human Rights Futures 198).

As the most powerful nation in the world who prevents wars, the U.S. must respond to end the Rohingya suffering (Jonah and Shelly par 2). While the U.S. looks for a peaceful solution, others need a concrete reaction from the U.S. to end the crisis. "The United States has a strong humanitarian concern for the plight of the Rohingya and should help the new government urgently address this situation so that it does not become a flashpoint for further social and religious destabilization" (A.Clapp 12-13). The U.S must conduct an in-depth investigation about the Rohingya crisis in order to look up for the causes of ethnic conflicts in Burma as a first step that reflects the U.S. willingness to help the Rohingya.

During George Bush presidential term, Burma was harshly criticized by senior U.S. officials. For instance in 2003, one influential senator declared that Burma presents a danger to itself and to its neighbors. In addition to, the secretary of state Condoleezza Rice described it as an 'outpost of tyranny' (Royce 3-4). Ethnic conflicts and the current situation in Burma were described harshly from officials because it becomes a state of oppression.

In his speech in 2006, the president classified Burma along with Syria, Iran and North Korea as places that needed the demands of freedom, justice and peace Mr. Royce supposed that the U.S. foreign policy towards Burma made it more complex. Since the army is the supreme authority, it has the authority to draft the constitution, to preserve veto power in the parliament and to control all government institutions. As



a result, the army has all the power to run the country and commit crimes with impunity. When America abolished sanctions against Burma, it also abolished sanctions the military; as a consequence, it became legal to have economic relations and the institutions which financed the Burmese army. Ms. Royce also thinks that the U.S. must reconsider its policy towards Myanmar taking into account the inhuman practices of the army towards the innocent people. "While the military is waging and war innocent, the U.S. must reconsider its policy on targeted sanctions" (Royce 3-4). The U.S targets the military by the sanctions because the military is the responsible to rule the country also come with crimes against ethnic minorities as the Rohingya.

**Table 1**

**Summary of Sanctions on U.S. Burma**

Type of Sanctions	Summary of Sanctions	Date of Waiver	Summary of Waiver
Visa Ban	Prohibition on issuing visas to selected Burmese officials.	September 19, 2012	Lifts visa ban for President TheinSein and Speaker Shwe Mann
Restrictions on Financial Services	Limitation on the export or reexport of financial services to Burma	July 11, 2012	Allows the provision of financial services to Burma
"Frozen Assets"	Prohibition on the transfer or utilization of assets of selected Burmese officials held by U.S. financial institutions		
General Import Ban	Ban on the import of products of		

	Burmese origin		
Specific Import Ban	Ban on the import of selected goods contain materials from Burma, and products made by certain Burmese companies		
Investment Ban	Ban on new U.S. investments in Burma	July 11, 2012	Allows new U.S. investments in Burma
Bilateral and Multilateral Assistance Ban	Limitations of the provision of certain types of assistance to Burma by the U.S. government and international financial institutions	September 14, 2012	Allows certain U.S. assistance previously prohibited due to Burma's poor performance on illegal drug trafficking and production

Source: F. Martin, Michael. "U.S. Sanctions on Burma". Acting Section Research, Manager/Specialist in Asian Affairs. Congressional Research Service, Oct 19, 2012, p. 4.

In his article Eric Han said " The U.S. in response to the gross violation of human rights stemming from the tow events, cut off diplomatic ties and placed several sanctions on the regime over the past two decades, many of which are still in place." The U.S. sanctions main goal is to improve human rights and implement democratic system in Burma. Also, ' punishing' the junta for its human rights violation, such as the Rohingya Muslims violation (1-3). As mentioned earlier, Economic sanctions are an important policy pursued by the U.S. Consequently, the economic sanctions were positive, leading to the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. In other hand, economic sanctions have made Myanmar's situation worse, especially with regard to military rule and human rights.

On the other hand, Eric mentioned that the “U.S. bilateral sanctions failed to make any considerable impact on the military junta's economic activities or domestic policies”. Regardless, the U.S. put pressure and restrictions on the military, the violence is continuing. He also stated that "the EOs helped on protecting opposition leaders as well as providing leverage to the west with regard to the future negotiations with Myanmar's military junta" However, Burma accepted some treaties like Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW and the UN Convention against transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). Also the junta accepted access to provide assistance in development projects and programs from agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (8). This means that Burma’s government has a deep concern about the human rights abuses and has the will to change the situation.

Larry A. Kirsch in his report said” The United States and the European Union reacted strongly against the actions of the Burmese military government”. The Treasury and State Departments issued list of names of Burmese officials under Executive Order of July 28, 2003; The EO had banned Burmese officials from receiving visas and had frozen their financial assets in the UN Security council to take up the Burma situation and consider sanctions against the Burmese government. The administration also urged China, the Burmese government’s main foreign supporter, to pressure the Burmese government to end suppressive tactics (2). The U.S. put a range of orders presented in harsh sanctions that target the government as a solution to put the junta under pressure to get away from the ethnic conflicts in the country.

In his report Michael F. Martin drew his attention on U.S. response during Obama's presidential term. The writer describes U.S. policy in Myanmar as more

sever, especially by imposing of economic sanctions. In addition to, the writer raised questions and discussion on whether to lift these sanctions and open a debate over if the idea of commuting sanctions was suitable. Also, he suggested that these important political aspects of Myanmar should be kept under observation. The U.S. sanctions imposed against Burma not only targeting the military government but also the economy, although the sanctions are pressuring the government, the action is provoking such questions on whether the sanctions are an appropriate solution to end the conflicts in Burma(*U.S. policy towards Burma*1-10 ).

Even though, the U.S. had made efforts related to the Rohingya but the U.S. response to the Rohingya Muslims issue was not strong enough. Political activists and Capitol Hill officials criticized U.S. reaction to the Rohingya crisis as inadequate. They claim that the U.S. did not put enough pressure on the Myanmar Government to improve the conditions of the Rohingya and warn that its silence would exacerbate the crisis. Legislators also condemned the outreach from the State of department as too few and too little. In addition, members of congress believe that lifting the sanctions was not a right decision and demanded sanctions re-imposition. At the same time, if the U.S. does so, it could harm its interests in Asia which may explains America's reluctance to intervene in ending the Rohingya suffering because the U.S. response during Trump's administration was not different from Obama's administration (Blue 1, 6).

Though, U.S. intervention in the Rohingya issue is morally right but not suitable for the purpose of U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, the U.S. must stop treating the persecution of the Rohingya as a secondary concern unless Myanmar rulers change its policy. Habib Sadiqui said" the U.S. should not support a Burmese government that oppresses the Rohingya" (qtd in Bertatsky 81). The U.S. must take a firm stands

towards the Rohingya issue, for instance the U.S. should re-impose sanctions on the Myanmar government in response the human rights violation.

Although, the democratic reforms made by the U.S. in Myanmar had positive results because it leads to the change of the regime from military repression system to a democratic one, the shift did not touch everyone, including the Rohingya. The Burmese army continues to practice repression and annihilation against Rohingya (Fuchs pars 4-6). However, unless the U.S. does not radically solve the Rohingya problem, it would be similar to that of Rwanda which witnessed genocide in 1994 at the time; the U.S. administration did not act quickly enough to address the situation. Consequently, more than half million Tutsis were killed (Thompson 434). Moreover, the U.S. must take a firm stand and a concrete action concerning the Rohingya issue. The U.S. government should give a diplomatic warning to the Government of Myanmar and impose the sanctions again (Ibrahim 94). The U.S. must go to the UN Security Council to seek a global arms embargo on Myanmar's military, impose sanctions on military officials and demand equal protection for Rohingya population, the safe return of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar by international non-governmental organizations and United Nation.

### **3.3. Obama's Response to the Plight of the Rohingya**

After he took office in 2009, President Barak Obama makes a visit to Myanmar in which he restored diplomatic relations. Since no President of U.S. has visited Myanmar before, Obama's visit described as a 'historic one'. During this visit in 2012, Myanmar freed 452 detainees and 1000 political prisoners, his visit encouraged Myanmar not to engage in military and nuclear trade with North Korea. In addition, president Obama has ended U.S. isolation of Myanmar's generals which played a

great role in coaxing them into political reforms. The U.S. reward Myanmar for political prisoner's releases by suspending its sanctions. In November 14, 2012, Hillary Clinton the U.S. Secretary of State stated that' President Barak Obama would tackle the violence in Myanmar between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims during the visit to Myanmar. Also she said that this issue would be included in Obama's speech(Alam 44-45).

In his visit to Yangon University President Obama said:

Today, we look at the recent violence in Rakhine State that has caused so much suffering, and we see the danger of continued tensions there. For too long, the people of this State, including ethnic Rakhines, have faced crushing poverty and persecution. But there is no excuse for violence against innocent people. And the Rohingya hold themselves hold within themselves the same dignity as you do and I do (Remarks by President Obama at the University of Yangon par 3)

After his visit, Hillary Rodham Clinton represented a dramatic shift in policy towards Myanmar and shows new U.S. concern to Asian relations. However U.S. strengthen its ties with Myanmar because of the series of sanctions which imposed on Myanmar government; as well as its strategic location where it lies between India and China and the strait of Malacca the world's most vital strategic water passages and the shortest Sea road to Asia and the door of China (Alam 53).

In a letter by senators and members of Congress to President Obama, they shed the light on the violence committed against the Rohingya Muslims by the Burma Army in Rakhine State which is continuing and the government has failed to end the displacement of thousands of Rohingya. They also demanded the U.S. president to

provide victims of violence with humanitarian aid, regardless of religion or race, in both Rakhine and Kashin States (pars 5-6).

On May 2013, U.S president Barak Obama extends current sanctions against Burma for one year, while lifting the 1960 visa ban. At the time he strongly urges Myanmar to stop the persecution of Rohingya Muslims. On November 13, 2014 U.S. president Obama tells press During the East Asia Summit in Nay Pyi Taw that the U.S. "would like to see new plan that will allow the Rohingya to Become a citizens through a normal process without having to do that type of self identification. Obama's visit also marked by the gradual remove of sanction he U.S. has imposed on Myanmar and enables the international financial institutions like World Bank to engage in development worker in Myanmar which means U.S. back to share business with Myanmar (Alam 53).

In nutshell, The Obama administration responded to the crisis in Burma by establishing a set of sanctions targeting the military rule aiming at restoring peace and development. After, the Trump administration did not make further changes but it also comes to continue the same idea as the president Obama. However, the Trump administration has provided to Bangladesh and Rakhines State by humanitarian assistance approximately \$500 million for the refugees, also he called to ban sales of arms in Burma. Furthermore, the Trump administration described what is happening to human rights violation in Myanmar as' genocide or crimes against humanity. In addition the congress looks for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Myanmar also looks to what kind of aid to provide the victims with. Bothe presidents Obama and Trump administration's policies in Myanmar aiming at transferring the government from a military to democratic elected government (*U.S. Relations with Burma...par 11-13*).

### **3.4. U.S. Aid to the Rohingya**

A part from violence one of the main reasons that led the Rohingya to flee to neighboring countries, was a lack of the most important requirements of life and human suffering in Rakhine which the UN describe it as 'unimaginable' (Bangladesh and Burma 56). The ongoing violence in Rakhine state and human rights abuses caused huge amounts of displaced persons and refugees also cause a miserable situation to the Rohingya minority. This comes with international attention including the U.S. As the largest humanitarian aid provider in the world, the U.S. responds to the needs of the Rohingya refugees on both sides of the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh and the countries where a number of refugees have fled. The U.S. assistance to Rohingya refugees was humanitarian and financial aid to help them improve their situation. In 2010, the U.S. has provided 23\$ million, the meantime, Congressman Christopher Smith introduced a resolution to grant' full and equal citizenship for the Rohingya also called to remove restrictions on them and provide them with assistance to education (Sidhu and Parnini 12).

In response to the Rohingya crisis, the U.S. has allocated 38 million\$ for Bangladesh because it opened its doors to the Rohingya refugees. But the ambassador estimate that the amount provided by the U.S. is small compared to challenges that is facing the government of Bangladesh. The ambassador believes that the Bangladesh government deserves more support from America because it receives a large number of refugees in addition to the Rohingya. Furthermore, the U.S. remains the major respondent to the Rohingya crisis, providing humanitarian assistance estimated at 449 million dollar since the outbreak of violence in August 2017, of which nearly 406 million was devoted for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. State department said:" We continue to call on others to join us in contributing to this response" (Royce3-6).



A U.S. delegation visited a camp hosting Rohingya refugees in Cox-Bazar region in Bangladesh. Moreover, the delegation visited areas in Myanmar including Rakhine state where the majority of Muslims live. Albright deputy assistant Secretary of state, who headed the U.S. delegation, stated that the U.S. had held a dialogue with the Myanmar government. He said: “We have consistently discussed with the government of Myanmar the need for humanitarian works to reach communities in need and, we have asked them to make progress in a transparent and effective process of Rohingya citizenship claims” The U.S. and EU have announced additional humanitarian aid to the Rohingya Facilitate the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. In this regard, the visits are part of the U.S. tour around the world which involves humanitarian aid programs (kajjo and Shakill 1-10).

On January 25, 2018, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. announced the granting of 18.4 million dollar to the UN world food program for emergency food assistance to Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar province, Bangladesh. Yet, the emergency assistance will contribute to reduce malnutrition and child mortality. Though, it targeted more than 34.8000 children under the age of five as well as pregnant and lactating women. Moreover, food distribution USAID helps to provide food security for Rohingya. Furthermore, the U.S. government has provided more than 7Billions of dollars in development assistance to Bangladesh since 1971 in addition to in 2016, USAID provided nearly 200 millions of dollars to improve the living conditions of refugees in Bangladesh through programs to expand food security and improve health, education (The United States Announce...pars 1-6).

On January 29, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power spoken at the U.N Security Council about the discrimination against the Rohingya that left them without

citizenship, vulnerability and marginalization. She warns that violence poses a real threat to Muslims and calls for an independent investigation into the events (Timeline of International Response...12). In his report Antoni Slodkowski stated that the U.S. government aid chief urged Myanmar to take a concrete steps to ensure the Rohingya Muslims rights also to encourage refugees to return to the country (U.S. aid chief to Myanmar par 1). In 25 April 2018, the U.S. Department of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration announced the U.S. would provide the Rohingya refugees 50\$ million. This assistance will provide basic services as water, food, shelter, and healthcare (Burma Bulletins 7).

### **3.5. The United Nations Involvement in the Conflict**

Since the 1990 the UN become involved in Myanmar's situation of human rights. However, the United Nation General Assembly UNGA calls Myanmar's authorities to 'remedy' the situation. In addition, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights UNCHR created a group of Special Rapporteur to investigate and report the situation of human rights. In 1992, the UNCHR makes an agreement with Bangladesh to provide the Rohingya protection in camps and pressured Myanmar's government to allow the Rohingya refugees to return as well as to provide them with identity cards. In 1995, Sadoko Ogata UN High Commissioner for refugees urged Bangladesh government to improve human rights and the situation of refugees. Although the UNHCR found their exercise very complicated due to Bangladesh and Myanmar attitudes, the UNHCR managed to register Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Sidhu and Parnini 129-130).

During a UN General Assembly session, Muslim leaders called' for more action' to end the violence which the UN Secretary General discussed with President Their

Sein. Tomás Ojea Quintana, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights expressed his concern about Rohingya discrimination, asserting that human rights violation needs to be addressed in order to achieve a democratic country. Similarly, Chaloka Beyani a special Rapporteur on human rights of internationally displaced persons sees that Myanmar's government is the responsible to prevent displacement and violence against Rohingya while others urged the government to allow the Rohingya to return to their homes in safe conditions, and to gain their rights of citizenship also to encourage 'reconciliation program' between the Rakhine Buddhists and the Rohingya Muslims (Kipgen 240).

The UN work to examine and discuss human rights situation in Myanmar. Every year, the Human Rights organization sends a commission of Special Reporter to make contact with Myanmar's government in order to check human rights situation in Myanmar. The reports of the Special Reporters includes recommendations which uphold suggestions to the government to make reforms to develop its program as well as to improve and protect human rights besides they urge the government to remove restrictions on Rohingya Muslims and to guarantee their freedom of movement (Köhler 10-12).

According to the UN principles, regardless of religion, ethnicity the national authority is the first who has the duty to hold the responsibility to protect victims and provide them with humanitarian assistance and that the government can apply those principles without any kind of violation (The Government Could Have... 38).

Although Myanmar's government punished responsible for practicing persecution of Rohingya and violating their rights, such abuses are still going on. It has been reported by the UN, Bangladesh, media, and human rights groups that Myanmar's

military has placed landmines on the border of Bangladesh from escaping (Burma 2017 Human Rights Report2-3).

The United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan shared a commission in 2016 along with Aung San Suu in Rakhine state in order to study the situation of human rights of the ethnic groups to find a solution for the ongoing violence. Nonetheless, Kofi Annan welcomed the idea to support values of promoting peace, reconciliation and development in Rakhine state. Also, he gives opportunity to listen to the leaders in Rakhine and to work with the authority to "ensure more secure and prosperous future for all (Dalder Pars 1-8).

The recent human rights abuses and the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya minority group in Rakhine State Northern Myanmar has become an international concern and gained the world's attention. Therefore, this communal violence has become a challenge for the great power which upholds the world's responsibility to promote and protect human rights. As a result, this plight has affected the United States which is delegated to protect human rights in the world to react to the Rohingya and exercise its policies in order to overcome ethnic violence and to achieve its goals to promote freedom, maintain democracy and peace also to improve human rights situation in Myanmar. Even tough, the U.S. had made efforts to change the Rohingya situation but the U.S. response to the Rohingya Muslims issue was not strong enough.

## Conclusion

Despite the world wide popularity of democracy and freedom, it must be admitted that most of today's nations are not ruled democratically and there are many countries struggling for a democratic rule which gives the priority to human rights and freedom of the people. Currently, the world has witnessed the long last conflict and the highest level of atrocities, crimes and human rights abuses in North Rakhine State in Myanmar. The Rohingya ethnic population suffering began from Myanmar's independence from the British colonization. The Rohingya issue became a matter of awareness when the communal violence of 2012 led to a huge displacement of the Rohingya to neighboring countries. This incident was due to several events.

Despite that Myanmar is a multi ethnic region with 135 legally recognized ethnic groups, and despite the Rohingya historical roots and their existence in the country for generations, Myanmar had exclude them from the list of ethnic group and deny them citizenship. Thus, the Rohingya Muslims experienced persecution and human rights violation that never seen before because the Myanmar government does not recognize them as citizens claiming that they are illegal immigrants. As a result, they denied their fundamental human rights and forced most of them to flee their homes while others rendered stateless.

Regardless, their origin this ongoing confusing story of the Rohingya Muslims forced U.S. and UN to intervene because they are facing an ethnic cleansing due to the violence and the discrimination they had faced from the Buddhist majority and the government. Myanmar used numerous and cruel crimes against the Rohingya and denied them their human rights aiming at destroying this minority group. This violence led to further widespread internal displacement of the Rohingya.

The United States, as a responsible for the protection of human rights and the promotion of peace in the world, contributed to help and tried to improve the situation of human rights in Myanmar more specifically the Rohingya Muslims issue.

Moreover, in response to this plight, the U.S. maintained a series of sanctions that targeted the government to take a step into democratization and to improve human rights situation also the U.S. provided the Rohingya minority with assistance and helped them to improve their situation.

Though, U.S. actions have not effectively influenced the Burmese government to protect the Muslim Rohingya population. Since the U.S. permanently removed most of its sanctions against Myanmar in 2012, the Obama administrations improvement human rights situation in the country has diminished. Instead, the status of the Rohingya has been deteriorated dramatically. Despite, the U.S. House of Representatives call for an action concerning the issue, the Obama administration did not discuss a return to sanctions.

Thus, the U.S. has not responded effectively to make an end to the Rohingya human rights violation because Burma is an important partner in U.S. foreign policy to impose its military presence in South Asia. Besides some economic reasons such as that Myanmar has a large reserve of oil and gaz. However, U.S. must take responsibility for protecting the Rohingya away from all interests.

Moreover, the persecution of Rohingya Muslims will continue if the U.S. does not intervene seriously. First, the U.S. must change its foreign policy towards human rights through the separation between its own interests and human rights issue, the U.S. must severe its relations with Myanmar until the discrimination against the Rohingya ends. Also, the U.S. must lead international efforts to ensure accountability

for violations of humanitarian and human rights law. In addition to the U.S. must take a decision to do more pressure on the government by re-imposing sanctions.

Furthermore, the U.S. must hold perpetrators accountable and demand for an end to impunity in Myanmar. Also, U.S. must support efforts to properly investigate human rights violations, it should lead international efforts to ensure an independent and credible mechanism outside Myanmar to investigate and prosecute human rights violations and other crimes against Rohingya to encourage other states to contribute to this efforts. The U.S. must make efforts to resolve decades of ethnic conflict in Myanmar, including the implementation of the recommendation of the Kofi Annan advisory committee and extension of nationality to include Rohingya.

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