

Refugees in Exodus: Statelessness and Identity

A Case Study of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh, Indonesia.

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This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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Abstract

Stateless people are extremely vulnerable, and the risk of exploitation is high. The Rohingya are a severely oppressed minority in Myanmar, within a system that does not protect them but rather abuse the power to mistreat the vulnerable. As soon as international borders are crossed, they reach another level of vulnerability where anyone can exploit them, as they are stateless, paperless, and without protection from any legal system. The Rohingya are considered illegal immigrants and their religion and ethnicity has branded them as threats to the society, security and well-being of Myanmar's majority. Additionally, refugees and migrants are perceived as threats by large parts of the international society, causing many nations to stay passive in how they perceive their responsibility. What is explored is how forcefully displaced perceive their identity and sense of belonging, and how an alternative culture and identity may be built on the memories of the past from a recovering present. The Rohingya have been denied citizenship in Myanmar, and have been pushed further out of society until reaching the point of forceful displacement and crossing oceans in seek of refuge.

The research draws on qualitative data, mainly collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation in temporary shelters in Aceh. My findings suggest that the difficult experiences of the past reflect onto how the Rohingya understand their present. The complex political history of Myanmar have influenced the present day attitudes and perceptions of Rohingya as illegal immigrants being a threat to society. Although the country is no longer officially a dictatorship, the military still have power over the most exploitative sectors in Myanmar today. The Rohingya are now temporarily residing in Aceh of Indonesia. Having oppression and discrimination of the past at a distance, the Rohingya can reflect on their past experiences from a temporary place of safety, and create stories and identity as a community set in a different context than their own.. In Aceh, the refugees have received freedoms enabling them to start a life they have always wanted. However, as the situation is merely temporary and they still face restrictions, they can only build their lives up to a certain point, before they stagnate by the waiting and insecurity of what awaits. The Rohingya are, and have been, powerless in every situation they have ever faced. Powerless under the exploitative regimes, powerless boat refugees, and powerless refugees waiting for resettlement in a temporary shelter in a foreign country.

Preface

In May of 2015, the first vessel bringing Rohingya to Indonesia started sinking outside the shore of Aceh, the country's most northern province. The stance of Indonesia in regards to asylum and accepting refugees has long been to stay passive. As the boats started sinking, the local Acehnese fishermen defied their government and helped the Rohingya ashore. The boat was on the way to Malaysia, but had with a broken engine been left by the agents to drift in the middle of the ocean. After this and during the period when an exodus of Rohingya entered the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, Malaysia and Indonesia signed an agreement to provide them with temporary shelter. Aceh is a pause place for the Rohingya, while they wait for resettlement. The Rohingya's place of origin, the Arakan province of Myanmar, and their place of residence, Aceh, have certain similarities in history. Both have been independent kingdoms in the past, and both have ever since been prone to conflict and unrest, natural and man made. With the tsunami in 2004 hitting Aceh the hardest, the local community have experienced the need for humanitarian aid, which is one reason for wishing to help the Rohingya in their current crisis. Acehnese are characterized by the expression 'peumulia jaimee', meaning 'honour your guest', which they embrace now more than ever. Because of this, the Rohingya have received a platform to savor new freedoms, challenge their understandings and recreate their sense of identity and belonging. In the absence of oppression, exploitation and stereotypes of threat, redefinition and recreation have space to develop.

This particular issue has been left in the shadows for a very long time, with Myanmar being isolated from the rest of the world, and with ASEAN being the only intergovernmental organisation involved, if ever so little. Although more measures are being done now, it lies in the shadow of the huge refugee flow to Europe, as most media coverage is focused on this. This is a reason why my focus has been skewed in the direction of the Rohingya. In addition, the 'European refugee crisis' has already received extensive research compared to that of the Rohingya. An exodus of refugees are fleeing persecution in Myanmar while all focus is on the democratisation, and the Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. What lies beneath this seems forgotten. As the study is focused around statelessness and refugees, human rights issues are of great importance. At the same time, there is a great relevance to social sciences and development discourses, as this is an issue increasingly affecting the international society that notice the damaged sustainability level of having millions of stateless people worldwide.

This research could not have been successfully completed without the participation and consent of all respondents and everyone who welcomed me into the shelters where the main parts of this fieldwork and data collection is conducted, allowing me to observe and participate in the shelters over the course of seven weeks in the field. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to meet these inspiring and strong people who have given me a chance to get to know them and hear their stories. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help, support and contributions of everyone who have helped me in the research process.

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The fieldwork would not have been possible without the help of the interpreters used, as the language barriers were too big at most times. A special thanks to my friend and interpreter, Rizka Pramadita for her support, insightful inputs and helpful translation of interviews.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACT	Aksi Cepat Tanggap (English: Fast Responsive Action)
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
EU	European Union
EVI	Extremely vulnerable individual
FRC	Foreign Registration Cards
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisations
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WB	World Bank

1 Introduction

We are witnessing the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II, with at least one percent of the world's population being forcefully displaced from their homes. Over 10 million stateless people worldwide, by the estimates of UNHCR, do not have the opportunity to achieve their full potential (UNHCR, 2015a). This leaves people in a vulnerable state, as a social group facing exclusion and prejudice. Stateless people often feel a sense of not belonging and not knowing where to take root. At the same time, they are in a constant state of insecurity, with no prospects for their future. Important conflicts causing a flow of refugees worldwide have been brought into light the past few years, as the number of refugees has increased to the highest level of this century so far. Yet, some conflicts and crises fall in the shadow, leaving people neglected in their vulnerable situation. The Rohingya are a Muslim minority from the Rakhine state of Myanmar, who have felt the persecution and suffering at the hands of the authoritarian governments for decades. As stateless in their own country, the Rohingya have been severely exploited, and fallen under the power abuse of the system. As refugees, the Rohingya have been neglected, exploited and forced to exist in the darkest margins of society (Constantine, n.d.). A whole generation is growing up traumatized and illiterate in refugee camps around the world, or in a constant state of exodus and uncertainty. It is difficult to envision and realise the benefits of having a citizenship without ever being deprived of it. In this thesis the reality of stateless people will be attempted illustrated. These people are experiencing a life of no security, having their future prospects blurred out in a life as a refugee. The voices of the vulnerable and less fortunate are often side-lined in the multinational negotiations such as within the intergovernmental organisation (IGO) ASEAN, which have adopted the policy of 'constructive engagement' and remain with non-interference as a foundational principle. Aceh is an interesting context to study this topic in, as the province has endured political instability, conflict, and is prone to natural disasters, so that the area has been greatly reliant on humanitarian aid up until their recent past.

After decades of authoritarianism and a government run by the military, Myanmar have been going through a democratising phase, and are no longer officially a dictatorship. However, this thesis analyses the tendencies of the government to put up a good facade covering a reality of threats, discrimination, and daily human rights violations. With the positive media coverage of the country and its democratisation lately, what lies underneath stays forgotten. Neglect and persecution is happening at the same time, supported by the same government. Htin Kyaw is the recently elected president and Aung San Suu Kyi the foreign minister of a government that

still give the military full power over police, immigration and security organs. Suu Kyi has been viewed as the new hope of Myanmar, and has previously won the Nobel Peace Prize *'for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights'* (Nobel Prize, 2016). Although the political shift has ensured greater freedom for most, her stance on the Rohingya is that she does not wish to reverse the treatment of the ethnic group, and the persecution started under the Authoritarian rules of Burma continues in the same track under the democratic government of Myanmar. However, the new government came to power only a few months ago, so it is too soon to assume much.

This research is based on a case study of the Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, who have forcefully been displaced from the country, and ended on a ship that mistakenly brought them to Aceh in Indonesia. It sheds light on the reasons for their forceful displacement and their current state as refugees lacking clear prospects for their future. The issues are deeply rooted in history and politics that have long promoted xenophobia and anti-attitudes towards Islam as an unambiguous religion. Hundreds of Rohingya arrived in Aceh, the most northern province of Indonesian, with the first vessel rescued in May 2015. The refugees were granted asylum in form of a one year temporary residence permit. This was decided after an agreement formed between Indonesia and Malaysia to provide temporary protection while Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and International Non Governmental Organisations (INGO's) assess solutions on resettlement to a third country. The vulnerability of refugees who involve themselves with traffickers can lead them into unfortunate destinies. Although the safest choice is to stay in the shelters provided, many choose to continue their journey for several reasons, including patience running out, the urge to reunite with family, and the need to find work to further provide for relatives who still reside in Rakhine.

Methods, Background and Rationale

Qualitative methods are used in this thesis carried out as a case study, with semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observation as research strategies with purposive sampling. A thematic analysis has been carried out, in addition to analysis based on documents and complex literature. To understand the current situation of the Rohingya, it is important to gain an overview of their historical background. As statelessness and refugee problematics are sensitive topics, especially when focused on perceptions, there are many ethical issues to consider, with aspects such as torture, psychology and trauma. A goal was to examine and understand how stateless people in vulnerable situations perceive their past, current and future

situation, and how all this forms their sense of identity and belonging. The interviews are deliberately conducted as open and semi-structured, which in turn resulted in a broad spectre of collected data. I have been reculant to narrow the data collection down too much, although some topics are deselected. As this thesis represents my reinterpretations of the interpretations and perceptions of the Rohingya, what shows to be important aspects and topics for them is what I further have deemed important for this thesis. The topic is complex, and much needs to be understood to further gain an understanding of what this study is meant to answer.

The fieldwork and analysis are based on inductive theory, although the selection and focus progressed along with the research process. The interest and purpose of this study is both to get a greater understanding of the particular topic in focus (intrinsic) and at the same time form generalisations that may be transferrable to a bigger context (instrumental). Multivariate Model of Reactive Migration (Richmond, 1993) is a theory that initially caught my attention. Although it is too quantitative and proved irrelevant for my analysis, it remains a backdrop theory for the fieldwork, focusing on the complex reality of issues concerning migration. The two main theories are an Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al., 1998), and a theory on Rooting and Territorialisation of National Identity (Malkki, 1992). The Integrated Threat Theory focus on prejudice towards immigrants and migrants in the country they are fleeing, which is relevant as Rohingya are considered illegal immigrants in their own country. The theory is used in the context of response techniques of receiving countries in times when the influx is so vast that there is an urgent need for the international society to get involved. This theory becomes relevant somewhere between the fear of putting a well-functioning nation in danger of diminishing, or general fear of social issues appearing due to cultural differences, and the need to take responsibility for humanity. Malkki's (1992) theory considering roots and identity is used to assess what and who defines identity. It is especially relevant in examining how identity and a sense of belonging is understood in the context of stateless refugees, who have been removed from the original territory where they have roots. With a research topic of this nature and complexity, aspects of anthropology and a holistic approach have inspired me. Anthropology is helpful in studies on perceptions. In this thesis, what will be addressed is statelessness, displacement and identity. The study underlines the importance of promoting protection of the rights of individuals belonging to an exploited and vulnerable ethnic group. I will through researching social affiliation, answer questions like how forcefully displaced persons perceive their situation, their future prospects and being in the unpredictable state of exodus. In addition, there is a focus on perceptions and understanding of the past as alienated

and excluded from society because of extreme generalisations based on ethnic and religious differences from the majority. I will provide my interpretation of how the Rohingya's perceptions on what forms a sense of identity and belonging in their current situation.

In situations of refugee exoduses and severe amounts of stateless people under no protection system, ensuring an active compliance with the spirit of international law, ethical standards and norms is important. Anti-attitudes towards a social or ethnic group than that of the majority, grounded in religious differences, have throughout history created dangerous gaps. Many contemporary anti-attitudes are directed towards Muslims. Based on generalisations putting extremists in the same group as everyone identifying with the religion of Islam. Widespread attitudes targeting groups to the point where they are excluded from society is not sustainable for national or global development. Statelessness becomes a global issue as soon as nations position themselves to it, either by taking on protection responsibility, or deciding to stay passive or even close borders. Statelessness is a severe development issues affecting all nations to different extents, and is highly relevant to global development and sustainability.

Chapter 2 will contextualise the history and politics in Myanmar, leading up to the point of forceful displacement onto the Rohingya. The chapter include a contextualisation of Aceh in Indonesia, the location in which the fieldwork is carried out. Chapter 3 will elaborate the foundational theoretical- and conceptual framework of this study. In chapter 4, the methodological approach used throughout the research process will be explained. Chapter 5 and 6 provides presentation of key respondents and analysis of the collected data; 5 will look at how the Rohingya got to where they are and how they perceive their past and present from their current perspective; While 6 will look at their present and their future prospects from their current perspective. Lastly, I will in chapter 7 present concluding remarks and reflections around future prospects.

1.1 Research Objective and Research Questions

The main objective is to investigate how refugees perceive their situation after fleeing persecution within their national borders. In the place they and their ancestors have territorial roots, they have been deemed stateless, and face daily discrimination and human rights violations. Much of the perceptions the Rohingya have on their situation has roots in identity, affiliation and religion, which is why these are important key concepts in this thesis. A complex set of reasons have provoked Rohingya into exodus. Instead of being stateless in their own country, they are now stateless refugees, living very vulnerable lives in search of a nation that

can provide them with hope and prospects. The Rohingya have been called one of the world's most persecuted minorities. They are an ethnic minority who experience the great poverty of feeling unwanted, without a nation or future prospects. The data collection has been conducted in Indonesia's province Aceh, where the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been granted a one year temporary residence permit, while multinational negotiations on regional and international responsibilities are supposed to take place. These problematics will be linked to development by looking into the global effects of statelessness, response techniques and long-term effects and prospects for issues such as this one. The research objective will be answered to by bringing the focus down to these more specific research questions:

- How do the Rohingya identify themselves, and how is their sense of belonging and roots formed by their current understanding of past experiences and future prospects?
- How do the response techniques of a specific location [Aceh] affect how the Rohingya understand their past, current, and future situation, especially if refugees are perceived as a threat?
- What is the correlation between religion and identity for persecuted and stateless people facing discriminating generalisations and anti-politics targeting their ethnic group because of their ethnicity, religion and identity definitions?
- How do the Rohingya perceive international involvement in Myanmar's discriminating politics targeting the Rohingya, such as how the intergovernmental organisation ASEAN conform to their current and future needs?

2 Contextualisation and Previous Empirical Findings

This chapter will contextualize the history, politics and current social issues in Myanmar, and specifically within the Rakhine state. The location of the fieldwork is chosen because it is a temporary station for the Rohingya, instead of a final destination. The research focus on statelessness and identity, yet it is important to understand the operational environment of this crisis to find durable solution to the exodus of the Rohingya. Solutions should start in identification of constraints that hinder effective implementation of betterments in the environment at the root of the issue (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2).

2.1 Contextualizing Rakhine State of Myanmar

Myanmar stretches over an area of 653,407 square kilometres and is populated by around 54 million registered citizens of 135 different ethnic groups. The country, formerly known as Burma, is situated between two Asian giants, India and China. It shares borders with Bangladesh, Thailand and Laos, in addition to bordering three giant oceans; the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The Rakhine state is located in southwestern Myanmar, along the coast of the Bay of Bengal, and the region is isolated from the rest of the country by a wall of mountains with several names; The Arakan Yoma, the Rakhine Mountains or the Arakan Mountains. It stretches from Naf River on the border of the Chittagong Hills area of Bangladesh in the north, to the Gwa River in the south (Britannica, 2016a). The state was previously named Arakan, but was in 1989 changed by the ruling military dictatorship called the military junta, as Burma became Myanmar. As Rakhine stretches along the coast between the rest of Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal, most of Myanmar's offshore petroleum region is thereby occupied by the Rakhine Basin. It covers an area of 170,000 square kilometres and extends onshore beneath the Rakhine Coastal Lowlands as well (Racey and Ridd, 2015:93).



Figure 1: Map of Myanmar, showing the location of Rakhine (VOA, 2012)

The ethnic majority in Myanmar is 'Bamar', and to be categorised as Bamar you are also Buddhist, otherwise your religion is additionally mentioned. The Buddhist Majority in Rakhine go by the name 'Rakhines'. By estimates listed on Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, 2016), 89 percent of Myanmar's population are Buddhist. Muslims in Burma add to four percent, and

are generally categorised into four groups. The largest group is known as 'Rohingya' of Rakhine. Burmese converts to Islam are termed 'Bamar Muslims' (English: Burman Muslims). Following are 'Indian Muslims' born in Burma of two Indian Muslim parents, and the fourth group is known as 'Zerbadees', who are children of mixed marriage between Indian Muslim fathers and Burmese mothers. In addition to these, there is a number of smaller Muslim minority communities in Myanmar (Yin, 2005:163). All Muslims of Myanmar are called 'kalar', irrespective of their backgrounds and ethnic belonging, which Muslims consider derogatory with good reason. The term presumably comes from Sanskrit 'Kula,' meaning 'nationalities' or 'ethnic groups' but the literal meaning in Myanmar is 'black'. The same term is used to describe natives of Indian subcontinent, regardless of their religion. By referring to all as 'kalars', the Burmese authorities try to equate all Muslims with recent immigrants, and have in some cases accused 'kalars' of being illegal immigrants (Yin, 2005:164). In addition to the Sanskrit origin of the word, the new and more common definition revealed by a military major interviewed in the documentary 'Genocide Agenda' (2015) produced by the journalist means Aljazeera, is '*dirty, stinky Muslim*'. In addition to kalar being a word used in daily speech, the documentary further present an analysis of official Myanmar government reports that reveal expression of several demeaning statements regarding the Rohingya, such as '*the danger of being swallowed up by Bangladeshi kowtow kalar truly exists*'.

The main towns are coastal, including the regions capital Sittwe (Akyab). Rakhine was long accessible only by sea, but is now linked with the rest of the country by air and road (Britannica, 2016a). The generally hilly nature of Rakhine state leaves only ten percent of its land cultivated. Rice is the dominant crop, and the population was concentrated mainly around these areas (Britannica, 2016a). Especially after 2012's widespread violence targeting the region's Muslim population, many Rakhine inhabitants were forcefully moved to camps, shelters and guarded villages outside the cities and previously cultivated areas. This mainly affected Rohingya, but also Rakhine Buddhists have lost their homes in village fires (Constantine, 2016).

2.1.2 Historical context: Underlying Causes

Islam spread to the Rakhine coast of today's Myanmar through Arab Muslim sailors who first reached the shores of Arakan in 712 A.D.. Rohingya consider themselves to be natives of Arakan (Yin, 2005:164-165). The word Rohingya, also known as Rwangya, is derived from the ancient name for Arakan 'Rohang', while some believe that it is the corrupt form of an Arabic term 'Raham' meaning 'sympathy':

'It is said that an Arab ship was wrecked near the coast of Arakan and the ill-fated people took refuge in Arakan by uttering the word "Raham, Raham" meaning "compassion, compassion". The locals pronounced it as Rohang; since then the people living there are known as the Rohingyas.' (Yin, 2005:164)

The historical context to the bitterness between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims runs deep, and there are many underlying causes leading up to the point where the Rohingya now choose the uncertain and life risking solution of crossing the sea in seek of refuge. An Independent Arakanese kingdom was presumably established as early as the 4th century, and was at various times led by Muslim as well as Buddhist rulers (Britannica, 2016b). The Mongols and later the Portuguese, invaded Arakan. Arakan had been an independent kingdom until Burmese forces conquered the Arakanese kingdom in 1785, making it a region in the Burman Kingdom. The region was ceded to the British in 1826 through the Treaty of Yandabo, and remained the territory of the British until independence (Yin, 2005:165; Britannica, 2015). With Myanmar's independence from British rule in 1948, the province in which the Arakanese are dominant was named Arakan, and this name was later changed to Rakhine in 1989 (Britannica, 2016b).

While Burma was occupied by the Japanese, from 1942 to 1954. During World War II, the Rohingyas were largely pro-British and remained loyal to the British. The British often implemented colonial politics that included favouring of certain ethnic groups, which in effect created conflict between Bamar and Rohingya in the post-colonial times. The group were in effect made an object of mistrust and discrimination, and were considered as an opposing group of the Rakhine Buddhists and Bamar, who were mostly pro-Japanese in their efforts for Burmese independence (Yin, 2005:165; ICH, 2014 as in Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3). Rohingya leaders had shown displeasure with inclusion in Burma, and approached Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor-General of the newly created Pakistan in an attempt to incorporate northern Arakan into Eastern Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1947. Jinnah rejected, but this caused fury from Bamars and accusations to have threatened the territorial integrity of Burma (Yin, 2005:165). General Aung San became a prominent figure in uniting national groups to secure the independence of what was then called Burma. He is still widely admired and remembered for his dedication. After he was assassinated, a period of great political instability followed, and several revolts ultimately led to the coup of Ne Win in 1962, and the establishment of a military government (Oxford Burma Alliance, n.d.).

2.1.2 Discriminating Politics and Withdrawal of Citizenship: After Independence

Following the independence in 1948, President U Nu declared Rohingya a part of Myanmar's ethnic minority and implemented the Union Citizenship Act. During the democratic era of Myanmar from 1948-1962, the Government recognized the Rohingya as citizens. There was no segregation in between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya in Rakhine during this period (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). When General Ne Win overthrew power of Myanmar in a military coup and set forth the 'Burmese way to Socialism', the Rohingya started experiencing exclusion at the hands of the military junta (Constantine, 2016). Conservative Burmese governments have in more recent times refused to recognize the Rohingya as citizens of Myanmar, and are instead considering them illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. The previous military governments have all viewed the South Asian ethnic mix and the Muslim religion of the Rohingya as incompatible to Burmese cultural Identity (Wipperman and Haque, 2007 as in Palmer, 2011:100).

Specific laws clearly show discrimination performed by the military junta that acquired power in 1962, who first legislated the Emergency Immigration Law in 1974. With this, all citizens were given National Identification Certificates, while Rohingya people were offered Foreign Registration Cards (FRC) for immigrants. In 1977, the government conducted the Naga Min Operation to flush out illegal immigrants, which many Rohingyas saw as an operation specifically designed to drive them out of the country. In North Rakhine, where most Rohingya reside, the operation resulted in violence, harassment and arrests, effectively resulting in the exodus of 250,000 Rohingya. Pressure from the international community led to agreement from the government to take the Rohingya back, and Bangladesh repatriated most to Myanmar (Yin, 2005:165; Constantine, 2016).

1982 Citizenship Law

Less than three years after the repatriation, the implementation of Citizenship Law 1982 effectively denied citizenship to the Rohingya, causing statelessness to more than a million former citizens of Myanmar (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2-3; Yin, 2005:165; Constantine, 2016). The Myanmar Government's decision to introduce the Citizenship Law 1982 was based on the historical justification that citizenship holders would be limited to groups that were permanently settled within the borders of modern-day Myanmar prior to 1823, the year prior to the Anglo-Burma War that marked the beginning of British colonization (Poling, 2014 as in Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3). Every person would have to provide evidence that ancestors lived there before

1823, to be eligible holders of citizenship. The Citizenship Law included three categories of citizens: citizenship, associate citizenship and naturalized citizenship, to which the Rohingya fit none (Constantine, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2000).

In the nearly 50 years under Military junta's, policies were implemented that led the nation into isolation from the outside world, and created greater gaps between ethnic groups than ever before, even under British rule (Raymond, 2015). Their harsh policies included internal repression, and accelerated up until the point when certain ethnic groups are excluded from their society, socially and physically. At the grassroots level, the gap of hatred between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims increased as the Rohingya were increasingly seen as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, and even in their temporary ID card referred to as 'Bengali' (Pitsuwan, 2012 as in Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3). The word 'Rohingya' was dismissed and the use of it became a politically sensitive issue, as the government declared that the term was not recognized as one that belonged to any of Myanmar's various ethnic groups. The name and identity of Rohingya people is not accepted by either governmental organs or society unless they permit themselves to be categorised as 'Bengalis' (Tempo, 2015 as in Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3).

'We have said this many times, that Myanmar has never had Rohingya ethnicity... there are no documents about them in history or in any census taken since the British era.'
(Ko Ko Hlaing as in Lipes, 2013, 07.12.)

Buddhist nationalists say the Rohingyas are not a part of Myanmar's 2200 year old history, and claim they are illegal Bengali immigrants. Report based on leaked government files have found clear indications of intensified state-supported or even state-led 'othering' of the Rohingya as outsiders, illegal immigrants and terrorists. This national opening of an arena to utter hate-speech and discriminating statements has allowed Rakhine nationalists and radical, Islamophobic monks to organise campaigns of race and religious hatred against the Rohingya (Fortify Rights, 2014a). Radical Buddhist monks have preached and led anti-Muslim rallies, spreading fear and xenophobia throughout the whole nation. In the forefront of the wave of hate-speech, is the influential Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu, a leader of the Buddhist Protection Committee, and supporter of previous president Thein Sein whom he hails as the protector of the religion and national identity. Wirathu has helped transform the monkhood of the country, from challenging the generals in favour of the people, to becoming a supporter in disadvantage of the country's Muslim population. In an interview for the documentary

'Genocide Agenda' (2015), Wirathu justifies his actions with his belief that: *"In order to occupy Rakhine State, the Muslims created a race. Once they get Rakhine State, they will take over the rest of Myanmar."* On the question of why he is preaching to the public that Muslims keep starting fights and violence, when it is always Muslims who are hardest hit, he expresses that this is because of their belief in paradise and jihad (holy war):

"They were indoctrinated. If they sacrificed their lives for God, they would go to paradise. They would have fun with angels and enjoy the luxury there. So, they were inflicted with the desire to die. They were inflicted with a disease that made them to be martyrs." (Wirathu as in Genocide Agenda, 2015).

Although this is a documentary produced in the respect of journalism, it does present clips of interviews and document analysis that is more or less unrelated to journalistic aspects. The hate-speech and discrimination is often justified with stating a fear of Muslim citizens being a threat, both to the nation but also to Buddhism. Buddhist monks see it as their duty to protect their religion, and when fed with this propaganda, many have therefore been led to believe that Islam is a threat to Myanmar, and that Muslims are completely separate people (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3). As of April 1st 2015, the Myanmar government officially withdrew the temporary ID cards of the Rohingya population, resulting in the Rohingya being stripped of their right to vote and their possession of any identity document (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3).

2.1.3 Persecution, Violence and Forceful Displacement

Thirty years after the 1982 Citizenship Act was passed, and after the democratisation of Myanmar, the Rohingya still remain stateless. Their their denial of citizenship has deprived them of many fundamental rights and social services. They are forced into unpaid labour as a result of no legal protection, have had their freedom of movement severely restricted, are forced out of their lands, face restrictions on the right to marry, and endure excessive taxes (Constantine, 2016; Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2-3; UNHCR, 2016a). They face regular intrusive house checks, with monitoring of everything owned by the family and confiscation of everything that can potentially be a weapon or a means of communication. Within Burma, there has been a longstanding requirement for Rohingya to apply for permission documents to leave their villages. People who travel to the Arakan state capital, overstay their permit in other villages than your own, or leave the country, would all be scratched off the family list, the only documented proof of any right to residence, and would be prevented return by the national government, effectively deeming them homeless (Staples 2012:140). By returning after being

administratively expelled from residing in the country, the Rohingya will *'face long-term imprisonment if captured upon re-entry'* (Equal Rights Trust, 2010 as in Staples, 2012:140).

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh, where most are not registered refugees, many are arrested and deported and some flee elsewhere from Bangladesh. A large flow of 200,000 Rohingya were to be deported in 2009, and Burma started constructing a concrete and barbed-wire fence along the Arakan-Bangladeshi border, where the government state it was meant to prevent smuggling, and human rights groups argued it was to prevent the deportation of Rohingya back to Rakhine (Ferrie, 2010 as in Staples, 2012:141). Many in Bangladesh see the enormous community of Rohingya, undocumented stateless people, as a threat to their national identity (Constantine, 2016). Fortify Rights, an organisation working for the rights of the persecuted Rohingya, have obtained several official documents that have been leaked. The documents obtained by the organisation do not only assess the nature and extent of the discrimination against Rohingya, both regionally in Rakhine and nationally in Myanmar. Additionally, they present evidence of governmental passive complicity through knowledge of discriminating acts such as population control for a certain group (Fortify Rights, 2014a:22-36). The policies are said to be implemented because of a realistic fear from the Rakhine Buddhists of becoming a minority in their home state of Rakhine in face of a perceived 'Bengali' influx. Additionally, it is driven by the common understanding in Myanmar that Islam is a newly arrived threat to the country (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:3).

In July and October of 2012, violence erupted between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. There are numerous rumours around the story that ignited the wave of violence, but the official story states that three Rohingya Muslim men raped and killed a Rakhine Buddhist woman. In the days immediately following this incident, ten Rohingya were killed in a revenge act. This in turn sparked large scale riots in which state security forces were accused being responsible for the eviction of roughly 75,000 Muslims, forcefully displacing whole villages from their homes (CBC, 2015 as in Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). The deadly violence and burnings of villages, followed by round-ups by security forces resulted in 140,000 people, mostly Rohingya being internally displaced. The majority were in the aftermath held in government-designated IDP camps near the state capital, Sittwe (Alfred, 2015; Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). Following this, government official openly promised to tighten regulations on Rohingya movements and other rights (Fortify Rights, 2014a:34). Most IDPs in Myanmar live either in government-controlled areas or UNHCR-operated communities, and are in need of continued humanitarian assistance. UNHCR assist the more than 810,000 people without

citizenship still living in Myanmar (UNHCR, 2015b). Penny Green, the director of the International State Crime Initiative at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), is a professional on the field of persecution in Myanmar. According to findings of an 18-month investigation into state crime, she states that:

'While the Rohingya have been persecuted for decades, they have faced an intensified and unrelenting campaign of State-led terror since 2012. They have had their land removed from them, their civil rights have been rendered meaningless, their livelihoods have been destroyed, and they have been forced into detention camps.' (Green as in QMUL, 2015, 10.29).

Penny Green has explained that through the research done by her and her team on the violence in Myanmar, which includes analysis of confidential documents and reports, they have found that the ethnic discrimination of the Rohingya is on the state's agenda. She states that they are likely to have been involved or had knowledge on the planned attacks in 2012. One of the documents gathered testimony, *"implicating security, political and religious representatives in the planning and perpetuation of the violence"*. Several scholars claim that some attacks have been planned, with evidence from the report stating that *"Rakhine from other areas were brought to reinforce local communities prior to the attacks,"* in addition to arrangements of transport and express buses to take those who were to participate in the massacres to the location. There are claims that the government have been passively involved, as correspondence were sent to senior government officials and next to nothing was done to prevent severe massacres from taking place. The UN report Aljazeera obtained in the making of the documentary, stated that abuses was not only committed by local Rakhine, but also *'state security forces, including the military, the border forces [Nasaka] and the police.'* (Genocide Agenda, 2015). In the documentary 'Genocide 'Agenda, human rights lawyer Thein Than Oo reveal that:

"If we look back at the history of Myanmar, a succession of military juntas have regularly done this. They spark communal violence and raise riots, every time they faced political and economic difficulties." (Oo as in Genocide Agenda, 2015)

Inter-ethnic violence and protracted displacement remains and has been the primary catalyst forcing many to flee by boat into neighbouring countries and beyond (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). The global awareness of this topic is increasing, but as it is often difficult to get hard proof, there has been a lack of concrete demands towards the Myanmar government. Nearly

two years after the violence, the outgoing UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar said *'The pattern of widespread and systematic human rights violations in Rakhine State constitutes crimes against humanity'* (Fortify Rights, 2014b). Although this statement acknowledges human rights violations, statements on the topic are often subtle with claims, showing how reluctant NGOs and governments have been in positioning themselves to the situation.

2.2 ASEAN Intergovernmental Organisation and Regional Negotiations

Human rights are violated daily, and yet the international society and human rights courts have long remained on the side-line. As of July 2014, there were almost 1,2 million stateless people living in Rakhine State, by estimates of UN (UN, 2016). In 2015, a new exodus of Rohingya led thousands of these across national borders to seek refuge elsewhere in the region. ASEAN is an intergovernmental organisation (IGO) put together of the Southeast Asian countries Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Myanmar is the second largest country in the ASEAN region (Yin, 2005:161). The deteriorating conflict between the Rohingya Muslim minorities and the military-backed Buddhist majority in Myanmar has given rise to unprecedented political and security implications on the ASEAN region, most visible in the recent migrant crisis (Abdulrahim et al., 2005:1). The Exodus of the Rohingya would amount to the biggest humanitarian crisis ASEAN has faced since the end of the Vietnam War (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015).

'The plight of thousands of Rohingya stuck on rickety boats after fleeing their homes in Myanmar is quite possibly the greatest embarrassment ASEAN has ever faced. And the reality is the 10-nation trading bloc is incapable of dealing with the tragedy.' (Hunt, 2015, 05.15.).

While the US and the EU imposed political and economic sanctions on Myanmar in response to a pro-democratic movement and protests in 1988, called the 8888 Uprising or the People Power Uprising, ASEAN objected to the policy of 'constructive engagement' towards Myanmar. As Singh (2014:5) expresses, they adopted this approach partly to protect a fellow and to ward off the pressure from the West to punish Myanmar for its authoritarian political system and human rights abuses. Thousands of Rohingya have in the past years been stranded at sea with diminishing supplies of food and water, fleeing persecutions and extremely poor social conditions in Myanmar. As the scale of the humanitarian crisis escalated, immediate

collective action was required from both ASEAN and the international community at large (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). ASEAN member-states have experienced increased pressure, both to provide temporary shelter for Rohingya seeking refuge in the region, and to find long-term solutions to the issue. Thailand has agreed to deliver much needed humanitarian assistance to stranded boats, while Malaysia and recently also Indonesia have committed to providing temporary shelter to Rohingya refugees for one year (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:2). The ASEAN Brief identified constraints within Myanmar, within asylum countries, and within the whole ASEAN region. It forwarded six policy recommendations that aim to provide a durable solution, whilst acknowledging the challenges in their implementation. Their recommendations involved owing to the identified, including promoting conflict resolution; sharing best practices; providing development assistance; working on confidence building measures; redefining positions on refugee issues; and capitalizing on the increased interest on the issue to provide better livelihood for the refugees in the region (Abdulrahim et al., 2015:1). The above mentioned suggestions are broad and abstract, and how much have been actively done can be questioned, as the ‘constructive engagement’ approach they mainly use in relation to each other creates some constraints in willingness to actively position themselves to regional issues. Non-interference remains a foundational principle for ASEAN, and nationalism runs deep. It is formed by several nations who have their own problems: internal political, religious, economic and social (EIU, 2015). This may be a reason for reluctance in intervening with Myanmar’s politics. In addition, ASEAN have focused more on economically integrating in member states, but political mediation is not yet an embraced idea (EIU, 2015).

2.3 Indonesian Response Techniques: Rohingya in Aceh

Aceh is the most northern province in Indonesia, located along the northern coast of the island of Sumatra. Aceh is surrounded by the Indian Ocean in the west and north and the Strait of Malacca to the east, where the Rohingya arrived. Aceh has a history of being a trading point, which resulted in the highly diverse ethnic mix found in the area today, particularly of Arab, Indian and Chinese merchants and pilgrims. In the 13th century, the Acehnese became the first people Southeast Asia to adopt Islam, and thereby the first Muslim stronghold in the Indonesian archipelago (Britannica 2011b; 2013). It has later influences by explorers from England (1591) and the Dutch during the colonial times (Britannica, 2013). Own sources from Aceh state that the name Aceh is an abbreviation reflecting this mix: Arab, Chinese, European, and Hindi (Private fieldwork data, 2016).

Aceh has a history of more than 30 years of open warfare (1873-1904). The Acehese war arose from a conflict between the Acehese and the Dutch. In 1903 the Acehese sultan, Muhammad Daud Syah, surrendered to the Dutch. However, the province was never fully pacified, even after the end of the Dutch colonial rule (Britannica 2011a; Britannica, 2013). Aceh has been a part of the Republic of Indonesia since 1949. Although there has been resistance and open rebellion by the Acehese all through the 20th century, resulting in the creation of Aceh as a special district in 1953, the region is still administratively equal with the rest of the country (Britannica 2011a; Britannica, 2013). Resistance arose again in the 1970s, under the direction of the Free Aceh Movement, leading to periods of armed conflict between the separatists and Indonesian forces from 1990. In 2002, when the Indonesian government granted greater autonomy, Aceh adopted the official name of Naggroe Aceh Darussalam (Britannica, 2013). However, the conflict was not fully over until the tsunami hit the region two years later. The tsunami following the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake, is classified as one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. Indonesia was the hardest hit country, followed by Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The tsunami killed tens of thousands of people in Aceh, and destroyed large areas in the coastal area of the province (Britannica, 2013), causing great need for extensive humanitarian assistance in the aftermath.

Indonesia is a transit country for asylum seekers, normally on their way to Australia, but in the case of the Rohingya refugees currently residing in Aceh, on the journey to Malaysia. With the path to Australia effectively closed, Indonesia face the challenge of dealing with asylum seekers and refugees in a semi-permanent state of transit (Free Speech Radio News, 2015, 06.15.). Indonesia does not accept refugees for permanent resettlement, and did not initially allow for Rohingya to enter Aceh, but signed an agreement to take part of the responsibility in 2015, providing a one-year temporary residence permit for the asylum seekers from Myanmar, as they have a well-founded fear of persecution and cannot return home. The migrants from Bangladesh who arrived in the same boats as the Rohingya were not considered victims of persecutions, and were deported by The Lhokseumawe Immigration Office shortly after arrival (UNHCR, 2012; Antara News, 2015, 07.15; The Jakarta Post, 2015, 08.13.). Similar to Myanmar, Indonesia has not signed to any of the Geneva Convention protocols regarding asylum, and has thereby not agreed to take responsibility. In fact, their first response to vessels of refugees entering Indonesian waters, was statements to send them back. However, some 1,300 Rohingya refugees are thought to have been rescued by fishermen from the Indonesian provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR as in EIU 2015; Vit, 2015).

'International law forbids arbitrary, unlawful, or indefinite detention, including of non-nationals. A state may only restrict the right of liberty of migrants in exceptional cases following a detailed assessment of individuals concerned. Any detention must be necessary and proportionate to achieve legitimate aim. Failure to consider less coercive or restrictive means to achieve that aim may also render the detention arbitrary.'
(Fortify Rights, 2016)

Indonesia opened their borders to the Rohingya in May 2015, after Acehese fishers rescued more than 1000 people from the sinking boat. On May 20th of 2015, an agreement was signed between the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia, granting temporary asylum to thousands of Rohingya (Fortify Rights 2016; EIU 2015). Although they opened their borders, it is emphasised in Indonesia as several other ASEAN countries, that they wish to only remain transit countries, and offer nothing outside temporary asylum. They, as many other countries worldwide do not wish to create trends that invite more refugees to seek to their country. As political adviser to Indonesia's vice president, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, has stated to the newspaper *The Guardian* (2015, 05.20.): *'If migrants start thinking of Indonesia as a transit point or as having a higher chance of getting resettles, that would create another problem that we have to prevent.'*, adding to this that the main responsibility lay with Burma.

The first vessel of refugees was found by local fishermen in eastern Aceh on May 10th, and Aceh province now play a vital role in assisting Rohingya, now settled in temporary shelters (FSRN, 2015, 06.15.). Over the course of a few weeks in May and June of 2015, nearly 8000 refugees were stranded in the Andaman sea after being refused entrance to several countries, and only 3000 landed in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia (*The Guardian*, 2015, 05.20.; FSRN, 2015, 06.15). The United Nations estimates as many as 1200 refugees remain stranded at sea or unaccounted for (FSRN, 2015, 06.15.), but with the above mentioned number, the number of people stranded at sea or ending up in the hands of the wrong traffickers is likely to be far higher. Rohingya survivors who fled by boat are now confined to camps in Aceh, but are forced to depend on service providers, mainly being NGO's working with and in the camps, and most are not free to leave the camps (Fortify Rights 2016).

3 Theoretical- and Conceptual Framework

This chapter sets out the basic framework for my thesis, both conceptual and theoretical. Frameworks should include key factors, variables, constructs, and the presumed interrelationship among them. Frameworks can be simple or elaborate, commonsensical or theory driven, descriptive or causal (Miles et al., 2013:20). My frameworks were initially developed at the beginning of my study, and before the data collection started, but has evolved as the study progressed. Forming the conceptual framework early on forces you to be selective and decide which relationships are likely to be most meaningful and what information should be collected (Miles et al., 2013:20). The first part [3.1] of this chapter presents and defines concepts that are relevant for my analysis and the foundation of which my data collection has relied. The second part [3.2] will present the theoretical framework that is the backdrop of my data collection and support in my analysis.

3.1 Definitions and Clarification of Concepts

Sustainable Development

In the Report ‘Our Common Future’, Gro Harlem Brundtland defines sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ (UNDP, 2013:1) It is further stated that sustainable development must rest on political will, and in the case of statelessness, this rests both on the environments where the roots of the problems are created, but correspondingly on the international society. Stateless people cannot contribute economically in any society or nation, as socially and politically excluded. As a stateless person, you are excluded and often forcefully displaced from your country, or in the case of the Rohingya even within the national borders they originally reside. Statelessness hampers global development and potential to meet the ‘New Sustainable Development Goals’. No security framework ensures your protection or that human rights or sustainable development goals apply to you (UN, 2015).

Vulnerability

In a human rights context, and in particular related to the right to development, the term ‘vulnerability’ is normally used to describe sections of the population that should receive extra care and attention. Those in face of denial to basic needs for survival and live a life in poverty are often categorized as socially vulnerable (Morawa, 2003:1). Refugees and especially stateless refugees are arguably the most vulnerable people in the world. Vulnerability is a key

word of this thesis, and a broad word, which increases the importance of defining the concept. The extreme vulnerability stateless people face have extensive consequences. In the case of the Rohingya, they are highly exploited within their national borders. Non-citizens are often the primarily targeted by policies that are *'implemented in the name of national security'* (Wilke and Willis, 2008:26). When the excluded and culturally foreign stateless people are viewed as a threat to the country, they fall outside the system and have no legal status, rights or protection available (Wilke and Willis, 2008:33). As soon as stateless people cross international borders, they reach a different level of vulnerability, and face new and serious ways of exploitations. Statelessness puts a person at great risk of becoming a victim of trafficking. You do not have citizenship within any state; therefore, you do not have any papers, and are not officially missing. The fact that stateless people face the *'ultimate homelessness'*, makes them vulnerable everywhere (Wilke and Willis, 2008:49). The concept of vulnerability beyond the definition presented here will be analysed and elaborated in chapter 5 and 6.

Refugee, Displaced Person or Migrant

Numerous terms are used interchangeably to describe people fleeing their home country for different reasons, without much thought given to what their actual definitions are, and what differentiates them. In this sub-chapter, I will clarify why I choose to use the words I do.

Refugees are the weakest and most vulnerable category in a conflict setting. The living conditions for Rohingya in Myanmar have forced many to abandon their homes and their way of life, and too many have little hope of returning home. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

'...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.' (OHCHR, n.d,-b).

Migrant is a more general term for someone who is travelling or moving *"from one place to another in search of work or better living conditions"* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016b). Alternately, it can be understood as *"covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an external compelling factor"* (UNESCO, 2016). The word is often combined with a describing word, e.g. economic migrant or migrant worker, and unless used in the form

of ‘forced migration’, it has a different meaning from ‘refugee’ (UNESCO, 2016). Economic hardship, poverty and lack of work opportunities are believed to produce economic migrants, while political violence, war, and human rights violations produce refugees. In a more realistic perspective, it is more often a combination of motives that in the end lead to the decision of migration (Liempt, 2007:74). Individual migrants may not always meet the UN Convention definition of a ‘refugee’, if they cannot show they are personally at risk (Richmond, 1993:13). As the Rohingya refugees are a whole ethnic group, they do not fall under the definition of ‘individual migrants’, but may have difficulties showing their identity and their need for protection, as they are stateless, and many paperless. A high number of Rohingya residing in camps outside of Myanmar, losing their link to Myanmar as soon as they leave, and numerous refugees are therefore still unregistered. Unregistered, paperless refugees are often counted as an illegal refugees, and can be defined as “a person lacking official documentation or evidence of identity (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016c).

The sociological definition of a refugee differentiates from the international laws and conventions, as they do not only include people who have crossed an international border. IDPs are internally displaced persons, forced to flee his or her home but remain within his or her country’s borders. A crucial requirement to fall under the definition of a refugee is crossing international borders, yet IDPs are in several respects often referred to as refugees. Although they do not have a special status in international law, they are supposed to “*enjoy the same rights as other civilians to the various protections provided by international humanitarian law*” (OHCHR, 2016). Group exclusion, loss of trust to society and government, and feelings of threat and insecurity can occur independently or as effects of each other. A combination of variables is generally involved, ranging from external and internal war, to state-initiated genocidal policies towards minorities, mass extermination, or effects of natural hazards where civil authorities are unable to provide victims with protection or rehabilitation (Richmond, 1993: 6).

‘Global migration patterns have become increasingly complex in modern times, involving not just refugees, but also millions of economic migrants. But refugees and migrants, even if they often travel in the same way, are fundamentally different, and for that reason are treated very differently under modern international law. Migrants, especially economic migrants, choose to move (proactive migration) in order to improve future prospects of themselves and their families. Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state

– indeed it is often their own government that is threatening to persecute them. If countries do not let them in, and do not help them once they are in, they may be condemning them to death – or to an intolerable life in the shadows, without sustenance and without rights.’ (UNHCR, 2016d)

Asylum is a word understood mainly as ‘the protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home as a political refugee’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016a). The practice of granting asylum to people fleeing persecution is one of the earliest trademarks of civilization. References have been found in texts written 3,500 years ago, during the prospering of the early empires in the Middle east, such as Hittites, Babylonians, Assyrians and ancient Egyptians (UNHCR, 2016d). Over three millennia later, protection of refugees was made the core mandate of the UN refugee agency in the context of post-World War II resettlement (UNHCR, 2016d).

Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide

Genocide refers to violent crimes committed against groups with the intent to systematically eliminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or national group. The 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article II present the elements of genocide.

“In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” (OHCHR, n.d.-a)

The Rohingya, as a Muslim Minority in Myanmar, are faced with all these robberies of citizen- and human rights, and although the term is used lightly on this context, everything the Rohingya face indicates genocide. The Genocide Convention that came into force in 1951 has been ratified by Myanmar (Signed in 1949 and deposited in 1956), meaning the Myanmar government have agreed to condemn all genocidal acts. In an analysis done by law students at

Yale university in the US in cooperation with Aljazeera, there are strong indications that the four first elements are covered by the military and state of Myanmar. Although this is a documentary made for a journalistic newspaper, it includes law analysis and unique interviews of former military majors and public people in Myanmar. It is emphasised that: *‘For the state to be complicit in Genocide, they have to knowingly aid or assist perpetrators committing genocide. There is a knowledge element that is tied to complicity’* It is further stated indications that military- and security officers have witnessed genocidal acts, such as systematic rapes and mass attacks. These incidents are so systematic and widespread that it would not be limited only to a few actors (Genocide Agenda, 2015). In addition to the hate-speech of the influential Buddhist monk Wirathu, presented in chapter two, there are other radicals who have expressed similar attitudes:

“When the Mongul Empire was at it’s strongest, it tried to invade our region. We saw the danger ahead of time, so we fought them. Our spirit was such that we couldn’t accept their religion. Even today, we cannot accept Muslims and their behaviour at all. [...] If we allowed them to stay here, we would be swallowed up. We would be wiped out.”
(Than Myint as in Genocide Agenda, 2015).

The Rohingya are not viewed as a separate ethnic group, among the over one hundred different ethnic groups in Myanmar, but are instead considered illegal migrants who lie about their roots to claim residence right and birth right in Rakhine State (Safdar, 2015, 10.28).

A World of Insecurity: Persecuted, Stateless and Forcefully Displaced

As a result of decades of persecution, first military-encouraged before it became state-led, hundreds of thousands of former Myanmar citizens have become stateless. A stateless person is a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (UNHCR, 2015a). The 1954 Convention against statelessness was designed to ensure that a minimum set of human rights are covered for stateless people, and established a legal definition of a stateless person as someone who is *“not recognized as a national by any state under the operation of law”*, i.e. someone who does not have a nationality of any country (UNHCR, 2016c). The minimum of standards include, but are not limited to the right to education, employment and housing, and guarantees stateless people a right to identity, travel documents and administrative assistance (UNHCR, 2016c). Further, the 1961 convention against statelessness established an international framework to ensure every person the right to a nationality, and most importantly established that children are to acquire the nationality of the

country they are born in if they do not automatically acquire another (UNHCR, 2016c). Myanmar have not yet signed any of these conventions (UNHCR, 2012).

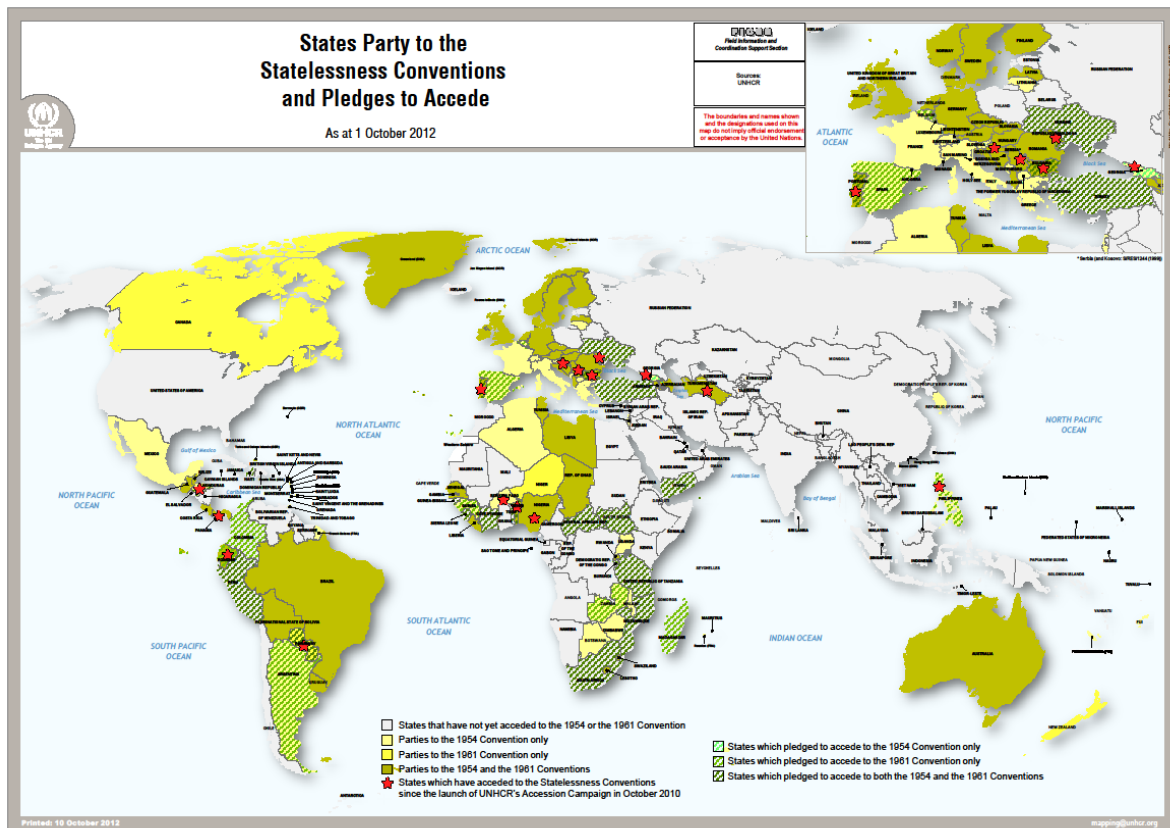


Figure 2: Map from UNHCR (2012). Grey countries have not yet signed neither one of the conventions.

Statelessness is sometimes referred to as an invisible problem, as stateless people often remain unseen and unheard (UNHCR, 2016b). A person's legal status have great impact on their social status, security and rights within the country of residence. In most cases of statelessness, including that of the Rohingya, you cannot work legally, receive basic state health care services, obtain an education, open a bank account or benefit from even the smallest development programs. Stateless people are often deprived of the freedom to travel, the right to own land and possess essential documents like an ID card, birth certificate or passport. People without legal documents are excluded from participating in the political process and are removed from the protection of laws, leaving them vulnerable to extortion, harassment and any number of human rights abuses (Constantine, n.d.). Today, citizenship and the security, rights and protection holding a citizenship provides have never been more vital in society. The reality of a stateless person involve many restrictions unimaginable for people who have not experienced anything of such nature. Without ID card, papers, passport, you are deprived of your right to health services, school enrolment, travel, owning property, open a bank account, and in many

countries: the right and opportunity to work, to further be able to provide for yourself and your family (UNHCR, 2016b).

“When thousands of people are stateless for the same reason, this creates communities that are alienated and powerless. Over time, stateless communities have been pushed further into the margins of society where their situation is marked by constant sadness, frustration, depression and loss of a life in which they could have achieved much more. In the worst cases, statelessness can spill over into conflict and cause displacement.”
(UNHCR, 2016b).

UNHCR estimates that there are at least 10 million stateless people situated in all regions of the world. Although the exact number is not known, it is assumed that approximately one third of these are children (UNHCR, n.d.). The Rohingya have counted to be right under one million, and at least 820,000 people in Myanmar are lacking citizenship (Constantine, 2016). Political theorist Hannah Arendt (as in Constantine, n.d.) describes that: *‘To be stripped of citizenship is to be stripped of worldliness; it is like returning to a wilderness as cavemen or savages... they could live and die without leaving any trace.’* Statelessness often comes as a result of conflict, forcing displacement on people residing in a violence-prone state, shifting borders or in the creation of a new state. In most cases, however, statelessness is a product of discrimination, intolerance, and policies that aim to exclude people deemed to be outsider of the nation in question (Constantine, n.d.; UNHCR, 2016a). In Myanmar’s Rakhine state, more than one million people are stateless on the basis of the current citizenship law, which does not acknowledge the Muslim Rohingya minority (UNHCR, 2016a). Statelessness comprises the relation between individual rights and diverse reality, and value of the state system (Walzer, 1989 as in Staples, 2012:32). Governments and people in power may use citizenship as a tool to marginalise, exclude and alienate those perceived as a threat to their national identity or political, ethnic and personal interest. This branding of “otherness” in grounds they have belonged to for generations result in entire communities being denied an identity and are in turn excluded from participating and contributing to societal development (Constantine, n.d.). Denial of citizenship impact regions everywhere and is the root cause to many critical issues, including forced migration, human trafficking and armed conflict (Constantine, n.d.), which is where the real relevance for ‘development management’ enters the field, as this is a global issue that increasingly affects all regions, when states have the opportunity to decline giving humanitarian aid and asylum.

Many governments, including the United States, United Kingdom and states of the European Union, now recognise the consequences statelessness has on security and human welfare, and are joining international human rights organisations in creation of legislation and programs to help combat and reduce statelessness. In spite of increased attention, little efforts have been made to intimately explore, document and expose the human face and personal histories and stories of stateless people (Constantine, n.d.).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The initial theoretical framework has changed in intention of usage from beginning until the one used in the end, although the content of this chapter mainly remains the same. The theory that first awoke my interest when planning research on the Rohingya was Richmond's (1993) Multivariate Theory of Reactive Migration. This theoretical approach showed to lose relevance when I entered the analysis phase of my study. However, it is still the theory that became the backdrop of my thesis, forming my intentions during fieldwork.

The Multivariate Theory of Reactive Migration (Richmond, 1993) is solely used in quantitative research, but comprises a set of reasons for forced displacement and migration. This initially made it relevant for my qualitative study, as it comprises the complexity of political and historical aspects in a contemporary topic such as the one of this thesis. This includes people with a feeling of exclusion, loss of trust, and a sense of threat and insecurity to current values and realities. Relevance of this theory is also found in research on refugees and displaced persons who have lesser freedom in deciding whether to move, what destination to move to, as well as opportunities of returning (Richmond, 1993:5-6). This 'system model' encompasses the relations and interactions between economic, political, social, environmental, and biopsychological determinants. A simultaneous emphasis is put on the importance of distinguishing predisposing factors, structural constraints, triggering events of reactive migration on the states concerned, as well as the global system (Richmond, 1993:6). Kunz (as in Richmond, 1993:2) suggests that religious minorities determined to maintain their separate identity may be classified as voluntary migrants. Zolberg et al. (1998:269 as in Richmond, 1993:2) identify three sociological types of refugee: the *activists* who are forced to flee regimes to which they are opposed; the *targeted* who are singled out for violent treatment because of their membership of a particular group; and *victims* who are accidentally caught in a violent situation. The Rohingya would fall under the *targeted* category, although this can be in combination with others in addition to this category. The Rohingya are experiencing physical

violence and state neglect, yet the second hand effects of that, such as poverty, lack of opportunities and social services, shows the complexity of the situation leading them to migrate, which in turn makes it difficult to segregate a few reasons and box it into categories (Contsantine, n.d.; Liempt, 2007: 75).

'Thinking in rigid categorisation schemes neglects the possibility that people may fit several categories at the same time' (Liempt, 2007: 75).

The case of the Rohingya refugees can be seen as a combination of several categories presented within this theory. They are social, political, bio-physiological refugees, as they are escaping from political regimes perpetrating major human rights violations and systematic terrorism (Richmond, 1993: 13-14). The exodus of the Rohingya is impelled by laws and customs enforcing racial and ethno-religious discrimination and segregation. The minority have faced deprivation of access to education and qualifications, and social mobility. The combination of social and bio-physiological refugees include escape from race prejudice, anti-Semitism, and other forms of ethno-religious intolerance or abuse. The reason why they fit under all categories, is that the problem is deeply rooted and affect their social status. Additionally, it is a political and institutionalised problem, where the state is involved in ethnic cleansing and the deprivation of basic rights, including religious freedom (Richmond, 1993: 15). The social and political constraints that come along with the state-led ethnic cleansing hamper other aspects needed for a well functioning society.. To create liveable conditions for all social groups, society cannot consist of such constraints. These aspects are particularly important to cover in a democracy, which Myanmar have received much positive attention for the past years. The problem arises when many of the most vital pillars of a democracy are neglected for minorities in the country, and particularly the Rohingya. Richmond's (1993) list of typologies show some causal threads, but demonstrate the inadequacy of any definition of a 'refugee' which singles out one element in the causal chain. Having a 'genuine fear of persecution' cannot be a singular element, because such fear is generally a factor in a more complicated relation between influencing factors, structural constraints, triggering events and enabling circumstances (Richmond, 1993: 16).

Threats to Society

The Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al., 1998) is a main theory, which focuses on prejudice towards immigrants and migrants. The theory is composed of four variables, and speak of in-groups and out-groups. The in-group would in this context be the Buddhist majority of Myanmar, while the out-group is the Muslim minorities, being the Rohingya in specific

terms. The first variable is based on perceived value differences and symbolic threats between groups. This variable concern group differences in morals, values, norms, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. It embraces threats to the world-view of the in-group (Stephan et al., 1998:560). Symbolic threats often play an important role in *'creating prejudice toward out-groups and opposition to social policies benefiting out-groups'* (Stephan et al., 1998:561). The second look at whether or not the groups considered threats are realistic threats to power, resources, and well-being of the 'in-group'. Realistic threats typically arise from competition for scarce resources such as land, power, or jobs. It may similarly arise from threats to the welfare of a group. The third variable include intergroup anxiety concerning social interaction with the 'out-group' members. This anxiety is an outcome of concerns about negative outcomes of interaction, such as disapproval, rejection, and embarrassment. Stephan et al. (1998:561) state that a number of studies have shown that intergroup anxiety is related to prejudice. The fourth and final variable comprise feelings of threat arising from negative stereotypes of the out-group. As Stephan et al. (1998:561) express, *'stereotypes serve as a basis for expectations concerning the behaviour of member of the stereotyped group'*. As will be discussed in the analysis in chapter 5 and 6, stereotypes within Myanmar go both ways, but are particularly evidently concerning the 'out-group', being the minority Rohingya. The threat theory may comprise a complexity somewhat similar to the former theory by Richmond (1993) in terms of complexity. Due to the different factors mentioned, it shows that one variable is generally not the triggering variable standing alone.

This theory applies to my context in two different ways: The Rohingya are considered illegal immigrants in their homeland, and is a minority who have been forcefully displaced as a result of attitudes branding them as a threat to society. It is equally relevant when they flee Myanmar and meet new societies, who might perceive them as a threatening influx into their society. Stateless refugees are vulnerable in the meeting with a new society that might have preconceived ideas and judgements towards the refugee group. This includes to what level refugees are branded with 'otherness' in a temporary country that provides asylum, or a third country for resettlement, both of which often have different cultures than that of their country or origin. Most modern nationstates have felt the need to control immigration (Stephan et al., 1998:560), and increasingly so in contemporary times. Immigrants are often despised, and negative attitudes are bred due to a view that immigrants threatens jobs of citizens, and that immigrants do not share the same culture as the dominant group (Stephan et al., 1998:560). Religious differences may often be something that triggers feelings of threat in receiving

countries, and in today's world this especially applies to Muslims. Islamic fanaticism and extremism is affecting the overall picture of Muslims worldwide, breeding dangerous generalisations that create difficulties to those who are categorized in the same group as those who represent extreme and radical ideologies. Because of differences in religion, large gaps are created between social and ethnic groups based on fear. One can assume that if an ethnic cleansing of a Buddhist minority happened in a country of a Muslim majority, the world would intervene more.

Exile and Exodus: Identity, Religion and Roots

Exile and other forms of territorial displacement are not exclusively “postmodern” phenomena (Malkki, 1992: 24). What differentiates the new form is that certain theoretical shifts give exile, displacement and refugee issues greater analytical visibility, focusing on illuminating complexity and examining the place of refugees in the national order of things, and use history to explain and clarify current issues (Malkki, 1992:24-25). The new understandings illustrate complexity, and challenges to think about identity and territory in ways that may easily be taken for granted. This is reflected in discourses studies of nations, nationalism and refugees, and challenges thoughts on who and what creates or defines national identity (Malkki, 1992:25).

Two main concepts that have great importance in this thesis are the perceptions of Identity and Religion, and how these two are interconnected. Both are key concepts, as much of the conflict may be rooted in just identity and religion. Although included in the thought process from the beginning, the concepts have been increasingly emphasised during the fieldwork, as these were topics often reflected on by respondents, although not always directly. Identity has many understandings, and the complexity of definitions are too broad to include in this thesis. The mainstream idea of identity is rooted in nationalism and physical base or origin. With all forms of migrants, but especially refugees and displaced people who do not *choose* to move grounds, it is of great importance to assess new definitions beyond national identity. Weil (as in Malkki, 1992:24) expresses that *‘To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.’*

It is widely agreed, internationally and outside Myanmar, that the Rohingya have long history in Arakan, pre-dating the incorporation of Arakan into the Burmese sovereign territory in the eighteenth century, before British colonization and independence in 1948 (Staples 2012:139-140). The excluded ethnic group, no longer viewed as an ethnic group that exists within Myanmar, but a made-up group of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, had their citizenship

withdrawn in 1982. Being stateless deprives a person, not only of rights and protection, but an officially recognised identity (Arendt 1973:287 as in Staples 2012:5). The Rohingya have no recognised identity, which in turn may lead to a mixed feeling of identity; where you are from, where you are now, where you belong, or a combination of the three.

Cultural- and religious identity is a dimension of security, and minority identities may enhance the internal sense of security in a group, but may also lead to anxieties and insecurity in a bigger society. In such situations, both majorities and minorities are prone to feel insecure about belonging and identity (Bartels et al as in Eriksen et al., 2010:vii). Walzer (1989 as in Staples, 2012:32) emphasise respectfulness of difference and although he is commonly referred to as a communitarian, it is often noted that his position is more complex than the label implies. Diversity should not separate; it is *'an empirical fact of life and a valuable attribute of the world'* (Walzer, 1980 as in Staples, 2012:32). In this thesis, through looking at how Rohingya view their past, present and future, I will explore what social frames and perceptions create attitudes and feelings of identity and affiliation. Community is *'a feature of our lived reality, a source of our identity and self-understanding'* (Staples, 2012:32).

To research topics such as statelessness and displacement, with a focus on perceptions of identity and belonging, I have allowed myself to be inspired by anthropological and holistic approaches. When researching vulnerability, identity and belonging in the unpredictable and uncertain situation of stateless people, it is helpful to focus on the smaller situation, using knowledge on the complexity, to describe and draw conclusions on the bigger context. Exploring larger issues in smaller places through in-depth ethnographic works is a main concept of anthropology. This approach is helpful for gaining deeper understanding when dealing with *'theoretical issues in the context of the particular, local conditions'* (Mitchell 2010 as in Eriksen et al., 2010:vii). In this thesis, ethnic groups in a different context than that of their own is explored, and an analysis of factors that led them to this new context is therefore important. The emphasis is on forcefully displaced Rohingya, who have left their motherland to cross international borders seeking safety. Challenging the questions and definitions on roots in relation to identity is essential to explore displaced persons sense of belonging and understanding of identity outside the territorialised sense (Malkki, 1992:24). Another understanding of this may be the concept of 'trans-localism' and the creation of a 'trans-local social network as a distinct form of deterritorialised identity' (Halilovich, 2013:149). For this to happen, shared pre-migration and migration experiences need to be involved in the process (Halilovich, 2013:149). In particular, it can be established in the context of forced migration

from ancestral homes by temporary or permanent displacement of large groups of the population. In addition to this, dramatic separation from identities are key factors in the establishment of trans-local networks (Halilovich, 2013:149).

'Motherland and fatherland, aside from their other connotations, suggest that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it. By implication, it is impossible to be a part of more than one tree. Such a tree evokes both temporal continuity of essence and territorial rootedness.' (Malkki, 1992:28)

The concept of culture have connections to that of the nature, but is often though to be rooted in certain localities, differentiating one local group from another (Malkki, 1992:34). When Myanmar's ethnic majority claims on the national soil, and a politically promoted redefinition of national identity was introduced, the minorities who fell outside this definition had to question and redefine their identity. New trends and ideas in anthropology and other fields in the past centuries have made it possible and necessary to redefine the concept of roots in relation to identity (Malkki, 1992:24). Rather than solely focusing on people of a physical place or a geographical locale, like anthropological studies normally does when going into depth on a topic, this research will attempt to focus on how identity is perceived and defined in the absence of territorial and national bases. I will explore how identity is formed by the memory of places the Rohingya can no longer define as theirs. This will be done by using both current and past understandings of location and roots, and its importance for identity. People generally identify themselves with cultures and origin, which often territorialises identity, whereas some people are *'chronically mobile and routinely displaced'* (Malkki, 1992:24). Refugees are pushed to recreate an identity away from the national sense. Attempting to examine and understand the circumstances of a particular group of refugees makes the complexity of what constructs identity clear (Malkki, 1992:24). The Rohingya are experiencing a refusal to become naturalised in the Rakhine society, as it is a common perception that they do not belong and should therefore not put down roots. Prolonged refugee status often have psychological effects (Malkki, 1992:33-35), such as trauma or crisis of identity, sense of belonging and purpose. From the current base of the Rohingya, they have to construct an alternative to the national and territorialised understanding of identity. Identity is mobile and in a constant process of change, and that it is *'partly self-construction, partly categorization of others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories...'* (Malkki, 1992:37). Especially when people flee, and move around, identities are often derived from social contexts where they reside, temporarily or permanently. Displaced persons with no prospects of returning, have to

ultimately create lives located in present circumstances, instead of merely being rooted in their past (Malkki, 1992: 36). *'Diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment'* (Breckenridge and Appadurai, 1989 as in Malkki 1992:38). Therefore, it is important to embrace the multiplicity of attachments people make through 'living in, remembering, and imagining them' (Malkki, 1992:38).

4 Methodological Approach

When doing research, there are two main approaches; qualitative research and quantitative research. The qualitative methods seek to focus on in-depth studies, and emphasises the importance of selected topics, while the quantitative method focus more on range and numbers independent of social context (Thagaard, 2013:98). The qualitative research involves highlighting processes that cannot be measured in quantity or frequency, and deals with processes that are interpreted in the light of the context in which they are included (Thagaard, 2013:17-19). Common for both approaches is that the researchers all need to reflect upon their impact on the process and results of the research; Using the qualitative method, the impact of the researcher's presence is significantly important (Thagaard, 2013:19). A feature of qualitative data is their richness and if based in a holistic approach there is a potential for revealing complexity. As this choice of research topic demands deeper understanding in perceptions of a vulnerability, identity and belonging, this empirical research is based on qualitative methods, which puts emphasis on the way individuals interpret their social situation (Geertz, 1973 as in Miles et al., 2013:11; Bryman 2012:22). The study is based on deductive theory, although the selection and focus has changed and progressed along with the research process. For this thesis, I have used several methods for collecting empirical material. These include interviews, direct observation, the analysis of documents, cultural records and text, and the use of personal experience (Denzin and Lincoln 2008:34). In my methodological approach, I try not to let the data collection be too colored by my preconceived ideas, but subjectivity and positioning of researcher is essential in any case of social research, as the analysis is my reinterpretations of the interpretations and perceptions of respondents. There is no single truth, and every truth is only one of several.

This research is carried out as a case study, which abstractly can be defined as a phenomenon of some sort of occurrence in a bounded context, and is in effect the researcher's unit of analysis

(Miles et al., 2013:28). The case study relies on interviewing, participant observation and document analysis, often connected to a complex literature. Case researchers greatly rely on subjective data, such as testimony of participants and the judgements of witnesses (Denzin and Lincoln 2008:34). It concentrates on experiential knowledge of a case and demands closely paid attention to influence of social, political and other contexts (Stake, 1995:120). Although case study is arguably not a methodological choice but rather a choice of topic, I choose to clarify my choice in this chapter (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:119). The case to be studied is a complex unit located in a milieu or situated in a number of contexts and backgrounds, which proves that it does not necessarily have to be particularly connected to location (Stake, 1995:127). Activities of respondents within the case are influenced by contexts, and although much can often be transferred, different cases react differently to contexts. This makes contextualising and descriptions important to understand this particular case (Stake, 2008:131-132). Several names are used for case study, for instance 'fieldwork', but case study is often emphasised because it focuses attention on what can be learned from a specific case (Denzin and Lincoln 2008:120). Case study can optimize understanding by pursuing academic research questions and gain credibility by triangulating descriptions and interpretations continuously throughout the whole study process (Stake, 1995:120). The reason why I choose case study is because it is a certain ethnic group who have experienced persecution to the point where they have had to flee, and with the uniqueness of this case it can also say something about a bigger and highly relevant topic in the contemporary development discourse. I am focusing it on an even smaller part of this ethnic group. Out of the ones who fled by sea, those who are part of my case are the ones who drifted to the wrong country, and did not get reunited with their families in a place where they could find work. Instead, they arrived in Indonesia where they live in temporary shelters and are not allowed to work or move freely. They have safety and if they have patience, they have a greater opportunity of resettlement. They are part of a small case out of a much greater, more complex context, who in some sense can represent this bigger context (Stake, 1995:121). Making a representative selection is important in case studies, especially if they are to say something about a bigger context (Stake, 2008:129); in this case the Rohingya in Aceh but also Rohingya refugees in general and Rohingya in Myanmar.

Case studies are divided in *intrinsic* and *instrumental*. Intrinsic case study is undertaken because one wants better understanding of a particular case, whilst instrumental case study is undertaken if a particular case is examined mainly to redraw generalisations and provide insight into a bigger context. The case is here of secondary interest, and facilitates an understanding of

something else (Stake. 1995:121-122). There is no hard line distinguishing the two, but rather “a zone of combining purpose” (Stake. 1995:123). My purpose was and is somewhere between the two, and my intentions have been mixed, and have shifted during the process. My theory chapter may reveal that I do solely want to generalise and transfer to bigger contextual frameworks. Damage often occur when the commitment to generalise runs so strong that the attention of the researcher is drawn away from features important for showing real understanding of the specific case (Stake. 1995:125). I started with an instrumental focus, and the case was chosen based on an already made choice on topic. As the research process evolved, I wished to both gain greater understanding in this particular case, yet also develop an understanding of some abstract construct or generic phenomenon: Statelessness and identity definitions (Stake, 1995:123). As Allan Peshkin (2008 as in Stake, 1995:124) emphasize, you can combine purpose, and your immediate interest can be another than the ultimate:

‘I mean to present my case so that it can be read with interest in the case itself, but I always have another agenda – to learn from the case about some class of things. Some of what will be remains as emergent matter for a long time.’ (Peshkin, 2008 as in Stake, 1995: 124)

How we learn from a singular case is related to how both the researcher and reader see similarities or elements of comparison from the case to a similar context (Smith 1978 as in Stake, 1995:134). Topics on persecution, refugees and statelessness are very relevant these days, and new information is flowing continuously, which makes drawing conclusions challenging.

4.1 Preparation and Relevance to Development Management

In my preparation phase, I made a conscious choice to not skew my focus too much towards human rights issues, to make sure I stayed within the framework of relevance for development management. When choosing an organisation or network to contact in conjunction with networking and finding key people or gatekeepers for entering the field, I quickly eliminated those too human rights oriented. However, from what I have found after the fieldwork and deeper research on the topic is that human rights in research concerning the interlinkage between statelessness and sustainable development is not only relevant, but important. It is particularly relevant for the shift in international framework concerning statelessness by which the importance is increasingly recognized. Violations of human rights is a core cause for statelessness and mass exodus.

The refugee crisis affects a large social groups, the displaced, the stateless, and the ones deprived of having their basic needs met, and without any security and prospects for the future. It is a challenge that does not seem to diminish, but rather something the world will see more of in the future. The topic is relevant for contemporary studied and policies concerning statelessness and issues concerning displaced persons and refugees, and human rights abuses.

4.2 Entering the Field

Prior to entering the field, I contacted Partners World, an organisation working on issues related to the Rohingya. They have offices in several countries across continents, although this does not include Indonesia. With their helpfulness in sharing their contacts, both from previous projects conducted in Aceh and from the human rights organisation Fortify Rights, my arrival and settling in Aceh become more convenient, and my network within Rohingya communities in Indonesia expanded. My early start with building networks saved me much time when I arrived to the location of my fieldwork.

Entering the field, I did face some challenges. Official research permit is difficult to obtain in Indonesia, and numerous people had difficulties in understanding the intentions and purpose of my presence. There were challenges for many in separating journalism, studies and official research. Entering the field, I assumed a covert role, and informed about my role (Bryman, 2012:433). To make access easier, I tried to gain support from someone within organizations working in the shelters (Bryman, 2012:435). Challenges related to this is further elaborated later in this chapter.

4.3 Data Collection and Research Strategy

The data collection has been carried out through three qualitative methods: Interview, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation. These methods give direct contact with the people or the society that is studied, which is important for the material I, as a researcher, gain during the data collection. An interview can be designed in multiple ways, but I have used semi-structured to structured interviews, depending on the nature of the interview. The themes were determined in advance, and written down in key words, but the order was flexible and adapted to the type of respondent, to make it easier to have open interviews, gain trust and create a safe space (Thagaard, 2013:98). The questions did vary some, depending on the role and personality of the respondent, but the main framework stayed the same, both to get the most fitting interview, for the respondent to share what he or she found important, but to

simultaneously ensure a ‘modicum of comparability’ (Bryman, 2012:472). Participant observation, or ethnography, is important to enable you to see through the eyes of your respondents, and observe the ‘taken-for-granted’. This method allows the researcher to collect additional data to that collected through interviews, such as behaviour and reactions. These are aspects that are easily neglected in a research focusing solely on verbal communication (Bryman, 2012:493-494). I was unsure on whether or not to include focus groups, as previous experience with this has shown challenges. The key respondents I found were in some respects key persons in the camps, and with them included in the FGDs, I found focus groups to be helpful and informative. Using FGDs created a safe space for people to speak, and to share their stories with me and each other. Despite language barriers, the interpreter used in the focus groups had a good understanding of my topic, and we both co-ran the focus groups.

I have used purposive sampling, with a main selection of refugees residing in the temporary shelters in Aceh. The choice of respondents is solely focused within the refugees themselves, in addition to conversations and interviews with NGO workers and volunteers in the shelter (Bryman, 2012:416-417). Early on, especially in the two camps I carried out the main parts of my data collection, I found key respondents who became the gatekeepers and important entry points to meet new and relevant respondents (Bryman, 2012:85; 437-439). Due to my open research strategy, and lack of knowledge on what would meet me in the field, the research questions and interview guide have both developed and changed several times after entering the field, the final research questions being the ones presented in chapter one. There has been little previous research conducted and published on this issue in this particular context, other than NGO reports with a different focus and approach from mine. As this particular context is temporary for the Rohingya refugees, changes happened often and rapidly in the shelters, people fled the shelters continuously, resulting in the amount of possible pre-field work preparations being limited. The organisations I got in touch with who had been working in the same or similar contexts helped to some extent, and did inform that the situation in the Acehese Rohingya shelters is inconsistent and under continuous change, as the subjects of research are only in a temporary ‘pause’ stage of their fleeing.

The fieldwork in itself lasted for around seven weeks, but the duration of the whole process, including all phases beforehand and in the aftermath of the data collection, stretched over the course of seven months. The number of interviews were not determined in advance, as I decided to use as many respondents as I felt necessary until the shared information showed patterns. This allowed for me to be flexible and make decisions about number of respondents, and which

respondents to conduct follow-up interviews with throughout the research process (Thagaard, 2013:65-66). As the focus is on perceptions, there were numerous different individual stories, and no room for generalisations in every sense, although some aspects were repeated and some general ideas and conclusions could be made. While being in the field, I consciously steered clear of typical NGO language and academic concepts, i.e. vulnerability. This is a choice made to avoid putting respondents in uncomfortable situations or affect their answers. Using NGO language or academic language may force labels and concepts upon them, to which they themselves may not relate. Empathy in social phenomenons that are studied, provide a good basis for a deeper understanding and insight, which is important for developing theoretical perspectives (Thagaard, 2013:16-17).

The data collection and analysis is based on an interpretive approach and a constructivist research strategy, focusing on the ways in which the social environment form interpretations of a person –or society’s reality. The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology, and sees that there are multiple realities, and often co-created understandings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:32-33). This strategy is useful to examine the social world through the interpretations of the participant’s world. Rather than seeing the truth as something objective, it is perceived as constructed by the social participants themselves, and methods are applied accordingly (Bryman, 2012:380). A constructivist interpretive paradigm is based on credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and is often used in narratives such as interpretive case studies and ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:32-33). In addition, I try to draw lines to historical and political settings of which the reality of the Rohingya originates.

Use of Translator and Assistive Devices

Although I have basic language skills and understanding of Bahasa Indonesia, it was necessary to use interpreter to ensure flow in conversation. The need for interpreter was even more essential, as the language skills of the Rohingya who have learned Indonesian language were a bit limited and with accent. Using interpreter can be challenging, and information and detail can be lost in the interpretation, especially with several links in the translation chain, which is why I found it helpful with basic language understanding. Although the translation process is working, there are several other challenges that can come up while using interpreter. As I used three different interpreters in the same contexts, this helped me manage to cover the interviews needed. By this, not only those with language skills in English or Indonesian were represented, but also those who only speak the native language of the Rohingya. Some interviews were

translated from Indonesian to English, some from Rohingya to English, and some from Rohingya to Indonesian to English. Particularly in the final version, the information go through several interpretations, including mine as the researcher. I experienced an information barrier with one of the three interpreters. This happened for a combination of reasons, being discomfort in interviewing respondents of different sex, and in not being able to deal with sensitive topics such as the one of this study.

I used tape recorder when the situation allowed for it, and respondents agreed, to create a relaxed atmosphere. A small recorder on the floor is normally forgotten after starting the conversations, whereas notes would be more disturbing, both for the interviewee and to me as the interviewer. Using a tape recorder enabled me to focus on the informant's verbal answers, reactions and body language (Thagaard, 2013:112). When needed, I took additional observation notes, and had pen and paper available in case the respondent or I had to draw to emphasise or explain something better. However, I mainly transcribed the recorded interview and observation notes after the interview had ended, to make respondents feel as little as research objects as possible. The transcriptions have been stored securely to make sure no information was lost, or ended up in someone else's hands (Bryman, 2012:214). Respondents have the right to be anonymous and every respondent's identity are under aliases, to maintain their privacy (Bryman, 2012:149). The principles of informed consent and confidentiality have been emphasised throughout the whole fieldwork. Each respondent was asked in the beginning and end of each interview, and the one interviewee that did not give consent, is not used in the thesis (Bryman, 2012:138).

Although case studies do not necessarily aim for generalisations, it is important to assess to what extent the concepts of reliability and validity relate to the study (Bryman 2012:69-70). Reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of a concept, and can be relevant to assess concepts in the social sciences such as consistency of racial prejudice (Bryman 2012:46). To ensure stability of concepts, I have used the method of conducting interviews until patterns were visible, and in conducting several interviews with the same respondent to make sure there is consistency in the answers at both or all occasions. As I have carried out focus groups as well as in-depth interviews with several people present, problems can arise if one respondent's answer is affected by another's response (Bryman, 2012: 169;715). Inter-observer consistency entails considering the degree to which observers code the behaviour of respondents, which can both be affected by the presence of the observer in relation to the respondents, and by the way the observer interpret codes and behaviour. As a researcher, my interpretation and

categorisation of data from open interviews, can be problematic when having to '*decide how to classify subjects' behaviour*' (Bryman, 2012:169). Being an observer from a different context and culture than that of the research subjects. Validity or credibility is '*concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research*' (Bryman, 2012: 47). Internal validity relates to the issue of causality, being whether or not something else is producing an apparent causal relationship. This aspect of validity is in several respects relevant to assess in this study. Validity is important for internal coherence and credibility for the researcher, and reassuring whether all methods and processes used are appropriate for the study. As stated by Maxwell (1992:279): '*If qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then policies, programs, or predictions based on these studies cannot be relied on*'. By this, my positioning as a researcher needs to be clear, so that my interpretations of the situation of the Rohingya in Aceh reassure internal coherence. Validity shows integrity and quality, meaning the researcher has to present data accurately, be clear on positioning. The researcher has to make sure theoretical and conceptual framework fits the data, and it therefore credible and defensible (Maxwell, 1992:281; Burke, 1997: 282). External validity is concerned with generalisations and transferability beyond the specific respondents and research context (Bryman, 2012:47-48). Ecological validity focus on daily lives, opinions, values and attitude that is expressed in their natural habitat. This is a form of validity that is tricky to argue for the relevance of in this particular setting. The Rohingya are not physically in their natural habitat, but is in the sense that they have never been allowed to taste the feeling belonging and national identity in the habitat they originate from. In this sense, natural habitat in itself is difficult to define in the first place. (Bryman, 2012:48).

4.4 Analysis

A qualitative analysis have been used to analyse the data in a thematic way, to form a framework that assists ordering and synthesising data (Ritchie et al 2003 as in Bryman 2012:579). Thematic analysis can be, and is often applied in combination with other analysis methods such as qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2012:578). This combination has been useful for me, as thematic analysis is suitable to gain overview and compare data from different respondents. As my interview methods have generally been open, categorization has not always suited, in which cases I have rather pulled connections to hypothesis created in my content analysis. Although I attempted using the analysis tool for qualitative research, NVivo, I decided to rather carry out my data analysis manually, as this is my preference.

As I have built the foundation on deductive theory, meaning theories are chosen beforehand of the fieldwork, the analysis of collected data is based on these theories (Bryman, 2012:24-25). The theoretical framework has changed since beginning, as I have learned new and important aspects after the data collection was started, but the analysis is based on theories chosen and not theories developed from the fieldwork.

In addition to analysis of self-derived data, I have included some qualitative content analysis and document analysis such as statistics deriving from the state or NGOs, documents that appear on the internet, and mass-media outputs (Bryman, 2012:551-557). This is because the context of the Rohingya are linked to a complex set of literature, and their whole story is difficult to interpret without considering the bigger context. A common view of document analysis is that it can give insight in organisations and can uncover such things as its culture, thereby being considered windows onto social and organisational realities. Some scholars, such as Atkinson and Coffey (2011 as in Bryman, 2012:554)) argue that documents should be viewed as a distinct level of ‘reality’ in their own right.

4.5 Challenges and Limitations – Reflections on My Role in the Field

There are many challenges, both in the preparation and in the field, and it is of high importance to reflect on choices made that can raise practical or ethical issues (Bryman, 2012, p. 84). It is important to build relationships and gain trust from the studied community, to be able to retrieve answers to my research questions and to meet my research objective. I lived in a location close to three camps, and travelled there each morning to stay until afternoon prayers. This was done to get a real sense of their daily lives in the society they are currently a part of and to observe their reactions and ways of doing daily activities. To build a better relationship, I found it important to take on a covert role, and be clear on my reasons and intentions, to gain trust with the respondents and other members of the communities. Although I did face certain challenges with cross-cultural communication, language barriers, and because the respondents and I are from very different experience backgrounds, leading to some misunderstandings, even when using interpreters. There are various manners of communication that can be misunderstood; between countries and culture, because people use words differently, in addition to body language generally being different (Bryman 2012:314).

In the first refugee shelter I intended to conduct interviews, I met challenges both from NGO workers reminding of the bureaucracy needed to undergo to conduct official research, excluding one NGO that was very helpful and eager to share their experiences. This in spite of me having

documents from the University stating that my role and the purpose of my presence. In addition, I met challenges in conducting the very few interviews I managed to, with requests of bribes and gifts in exchange for their story. This was obviously not something I could do, as it would damage my validity as a researcher (Bryman, 2012:49). Although the first shelter was challenging, I made new contacts visiting from other NGO's, who made my fieldwork in the camps subsequent to this possible, showing that every link in the chain is essential.

There were rare occasions when interviews happened in full privacy. Many respondents, both men and women, were hesitant in the beginning of each interview, when the question about life in Myanmar was posed. Either because it could provoke feelings of sadness because of the horrific stories would have to revisit, including torture stories and loss of friends and family members. The other reason could be that they were missing their country, because both family members and parts of their identity was left behind when they decided- or were forced to leave, despite the difficult aspects of the life they left behind. Most times, there were several people present, and more people flocked to the location of the interview, especially in the women's shelter. Although this is not what I ultimately had in mind, and someone normally wanted to share small comments to the stories shared, it was noticeable that this increased their sense of comfort to share. The interviews conducted with less people present were generally the more formal and less detailed ones that never entered the deeper level of topics of identity and direct perceptions. All respondents, both men and women, felt much more comfortable having someone else present during interviews, and the interviews in isolation were normally more informative than emotionally driven.

Both in participant observation and interviews, there is a danger of reactive effects, and my presence as a researcher can induce those being observed to act differently than they normally would (Bryman, 2012:495-496). As I am dealing with a sensitive topic, there are many ethical issues that had to be taken into consideration when carrying out a research of this nature. The research touch upon vulnerability and subject that may be emotionally challenging for some. The respondents sometimes left in the middle of the interview. Sometimes to pray or eat, and with intention to continue later, and sometimes without saying much. In some cases, it was hard to tell whether they left because of discomfort with conversation topics or because they had something else on their agenda. Although I spent much time building relationships with the people residing in the shelters, not everyone is comfortable with sharing detailed stories of their past, and inner thoughts about their identity and current situation.

In the start-up phase of my fieldwork, it was challenging to find an interpreter in Aceh speaking Rohingya, and the prices of the available interpreters was too high for a university student to afford. Luckily, networking led me to an interpreter I could use in my studies, to interview those with no English or Indonesian language skills.

Protecting respondents' anonymity is important, and therefore recordings and notes should be stored in safe places. I did have three interviews on phone, which was stolen while in the field, but with the advanced technology of today's devices, I managed to delete the recordings off the phone from a second device. Although this ensured the anonymity of the respondents, and that information did not end up where it should not, the recordings were never retrieved. The information from these interviews are used, although not quoted.

5 How does common history and background experience form identity?

Identity and truth is something socially constructed. It can be rooted in your background, language, religion, a common platform found with people in similar situations as you, or normally a combination of all and more aspects than the ones mentioned. As the data collection has been conducted in a different context from the original society of the Rohingya, it is important to define the context they are originally from. This is covered in chapter 2, with a presentation of historical, political and social aspects leading the Rohingya to be forcefully displaced. Understanding this complex context and history is important for several reasons, but solely to understand their sense of identity and the importance of religion in their own definitions and redefinitions of identity. Where you are from, and your experiences help determine how you define yourself, and sharing the same history and background creates a common platform from which identity can be found and redefined. The Rohingya are from Myanmar, and under the law system and government of this nation. However, it is important to see Rakhine state as a separate region with a complex history somewhat different from that of Myanmar as a whole. This is explained further in chapter two. Most respondents speak of Arakan more than Myanmar, as it is the region where most Rohingya themselves as natives. Arakan, the old name for the Rakhine state, was changed name of with the redefinition of national identity after independence. The respondents still use Arakan to refer to the region, and call it the Muslim name while Rakhine is the Buddhist name. As Arakan is the name the respondents identify themselves with, this is the name that will be used in the analysis.

In these next two chapters, I will present the stories of the Rohingya refugees I met in Aceh, and analyse the topics reflected on by respondents and me as the researcher, during interviews; about their past, present and future. The first part will reflect on their past and present, and what forms their identity and sense of belonging. A selection of three respondents have been chosen to be the main representatives of the Rohingya in Aceh. Rashid, Ahida and Wakar are the key respondents, who have been actively used and interviewed several times. Their stories represent the bigger picture and embrace the perceptions of many. At times, other respondents are quoted to supplement the stories and reflections of the key respondents. Embracing the complexity of the issues taken up in this study, it is important to emphasise that my findings and analysis are based on my re-interpretations of the perceptions and interpretations the Rohingya in Aceh have of their reality. How the situation is for different ethnic minorities and Muslim groups with citizenship in Myanmar, is beyond the scope of this study.

The Rohingya have faced persecution and discriminating politics for decades, but what triggered the recent exodus that led Rohingya to Aceh was a conflict based on an incident in 2012. Numerous different versions of the story of this episode exist, and none have been proven to be the actual incident. The mainstream version was first published by Wirathu, the face of radical Buddhism. The story was shared through his social media instantly after. This caused people to question whether this was a conspiracy against the Rohingya or generally against Muslims in Myanmar. Several public figures support the same version of the story as Wirathu, as described in chapter two. The story the Rohingya stick to, is somehow different from the public one, as this one retold by Ahida:

‘Four years ago, there was this problem that happened. There was this Buddhist couple, man and woman that had been together for three years, and the Buddhist man really liked the Buddhist girl. He asked her to marry, but the girl did not want to. The Buddhist man got angry, and said, “Why are you with me for three years if you don’t want to get married?”, so he dragged her to some bushes and he raped her. She tried to fight, and he got angry and beat her to death. He called his friend, and he came. Two Muslim guys came walking by the place. The two Buddhist guys arrested the Muslim guys, and made them hold a piece of wood. At first, the Buddhist guys told the Muslim guy to beat her up. He said, “No, I don’t want to. You’re gonna get me in jail”. So the Buddhist guys took a photo of one of the Muslim guys holding the piece of wood next to the woman. This is the type of thing Buddhists do to Muslims all the time. This was the beginning of the conflict four years ago. This happened in Akyab, and

then the Buddhists in Mondu and the other villages heard about this, so when there were ten imams going to the Mosque to pray. The Buddhists met them on the way, before they were going to the mosque, and tortured them. Some of them, they had their penis cut, they had their eyes taken, they had their mouths slit open and their tongues cut, and they were dead. All of them dead. So that was the beginning. Then the Muslims got angry and said “Why are you doing this to us?” Then it was all conflict.’

The details of most of the retellings of the 2012 incident causing violence are more detailed than people who were not present would know, from both sides of the story. It may have become urban legend-like stories, and people seem to want to find clarity on what happened, both sides blaming the other. For the Rohingya, they would want to make sense of why their religion and ethnicity brand them with ‘otherness’, and leaves them to feel excluded and unwanted in their natural society. Generalising an incident involving such few people, no matter which ethnicity the rapist(s) belonged to, makes the amounts of fear and threat feelings have been bred in the society create dangerously massive gaps based on religion. A small group of people from one group can never represent or give blame to the group as a whole. In the case of the Rohingya, to make sense of an episode that made life for them increasingly challenging, having a common story may function as a unifying element. The Rohingya refugees who have been residing in Aceh since May and June of last year, have many stories of their own but furthermore reminisce with stories from before their own time. Stories they have heard from their former generations and seen in old restored newspapers, ID-cards and letters. Drawing links to Halilovich’s (2013) concept of trans-localism, as presented in chapter three, being united through common background experience and common reasons for being displaced, opens for a space in a different context, where the Rohingya can redefine their identity through common stories. Wakar, a respondent born in the early 80s remember through stories from his father, times when it was easier for the Rohingya:

‘I do not know how it is now with politics in Myanmar. The lady [Aung San Suu Kyi], I remember her father, when he was in power, it was much better. Rohingya could work. It was okay between Muslims and Buddhists, around 1960s, 1968. We were called Rohingya at the time, on our card we were called Rohingya Muslim, but we could work.’

In a conversation with Wakar and Rashid, Wakar said this, and they both become thoughtful, before Rashid says ‘*It was okay for us*’, to which Wakar repeats ‘*it was okay*’. Rashid continues to explain that ‘*Then, some time after, some people started asking ‘why do we have Muslims in*

Burma, where do they come from? And then the conflict happened'. Before the Military junta under General Ne Win, the situation for the Rohingya was better than the current. Although none of the refugees in Aceh lived in the era before this, and few have living relatives who did experience this era, they are convinced it was better. Many respondents have a utopian idea of what Myanmar has been and could be, resting on their wish for the Rohingya to be able and allowed to call it their country and embrace their roots. Looking at Arakan in retrospect does not erase the bad memories for the respondents, but they are able to reflect on life in a different way with an enhanced sense of safety and to some extent freedom. Ahida tells about the big fights that have had major effects on the situation for the Rohingya and their living conditions; one over fifteen years ago, and the second one being the 2012 conflict. Ahida carries on by telling that after the last conflict, discrimination shifted from being encouraged by Nasaka police and military, to happen by encouragement from the government:

'We were not allowed to stay there anymore. Before that, it was the same. The difference is that the government says we cannot stay anymore, but there are so many Muslims there. When they started having an increased conflict between Buddhists and Muslims, some people left already to other countries; some people to Bangladesh, India, [and] Malaysia.'

Discrimination and anti-Muslim threat propaganda from public figures has increased throughout the past centuries, leading up to a point where the state actively and more openly wanted the Rohingya out of the Myanmar territory. These attitudes are bred on a perceived threat from the Rohingya, built on stereotypes and emphasised value-differences. The value-differences are particularly reflected in their different religious views, in the same way as described in the Integrated Threat Theory by Stephan et al. (1998). Chandni tells her story of the first attacks, strongly suspecting that they were planned attacks. She explains how people were shot by the military's warning shots in attempt to stop unrest and fights between the two opposing ethnic groups of Rakhine:

'When the conflict started happening, there was military presence. They tried to tell the Buddhists not to attack the Muslims, but they were Buddhists as well, so they did not do a lot to stop it. They just told Muslims to go away. In public, they would try to appear neutral, but behind they might support the Buddhists that attack the Muslims. Their way as a security force, to try to stop it was by giving warning shots. The Muslims would fight as well, to defend themselves. They did not have any weapons, but used wooden

sticks and such. So it was not knives and guns, but it was not as if the Muslims were not doing anything. So the military would try to stop it. They would try to give warning signs, but they were not aiming at the sky, they were aiming at people, to stop the conflict. Of course, the people they were aiming at were not Buddhists. The people they were aiming at were Muslims.'

Internationally, and in the public sphere reaching outside the borders of Myanmar, the government assume a neutral position. There are, however, numerous reasons to suspect or even claim that their politics are discriminating and targeting Muslims. As the analysis done by Yale law students, elaborated in chapter three, many things may indicate that planned attacks were performed. There is a widespread belief in Myanmar, that the Muslim majority and in particular the Rohingya are a realistic threat to the security and well-being of Myanmar. This underlines the arguments by Stephan et al. (1998).

Stateless in your own country: The effects of legal status

Colonialism and corrupt governments are often linked in the sense that governments may create politics widening the gap created during colonial trade and labour. A scary trend that arguably started with colonialism and the British colonisers, well known favouring of an ethnic group over another, creating a gap that is often hard to fill once colonial powers are gone. This highlights the complexity and the deep roots that has led to the current national situation. With decades of military rule after independence, the Rohingya have experienced increasing difficulties, especially after their citizenship was withdrawn. In addition to roots in colonialism and work systems during this time, some suspect that the removal of the citizenship of the Rohingya, and the eagerness to get them away from Rakhine, is because of the natural resources found under the land where most Rohingya reside, as mentioned in chapter two. If we continue on the leads of these assumptions, this could be an explaining factor of why there is conflicting trends starting between Rakhine Buddhists and the majority Bamar Buddhists. Rashid tells about the situation on who is allowed to retrieve the natural resources in the area:

'There is a lot of conflicts from resources as well. The Buddhists want to take all of the resources owned by Muslims in Arakan, including, we have these gas sources, gas and oil. They want to move all the Muslims, so they can possess that. Everyone knows there is gas sources in that area, and initially, the Muslims want to use it to support their living, but of course they are not allowed to drill. [...] Some Muslims tried to dig with stone, but then it becomes a problem as well.'

It is apparent that many Rohingya perceive a gap due to religious differences, and that many problems are rooted in this. However, there seems to be a more recent gap between Buddhists of different geographical areas in Myanmar, in the cases mentioned by respondents being between the majority Bamar and minority Rakhine. Recently, there has been unrest between Rakhine Buddhists and the majority Buddhist group in Myanmar. Rashid emphasises that the people in Rakhine, and especially the Muslims are wanted gone or moved away from the area, and suspect that natural resources may be a contributing factor to this. The violence in Arakan have forced people, both Rakhines and Rohingya but mainly the latter, to move around within the state as well as crossing national borders. Chandni is a fourteen year old girl who, as many other Rohingya, have moved around in fear her whole life. The Rohingya have faced discrimination dating back many decades. They have tasted the effects of their legal status as stateless in their own country, and felt the poverty of feeling unwanted, excluded and alienated from their society.

'It was not safe. My house was burned down, so we had to escape. We had to run. I lived in Akyab. I don't know a time when it was okay for the Rohingya people. Maybe before I was born. We had to always move to different places, because we were afraid the Buddhists would find us and take us. Santoli, move to Saki-fara [camp], Saki-fara move to Barjafara, Barjafara move to Refibarja.'

Policies and politics are dynamic, and different presidents and generals have affected the politics concerning minorities and stateless in Myanmar. However, no person of power has tried to give citizenship back to the Rohingya, and they have remained stateless since the Citizenship Act was implemented in 1982. The Rohingya, and in later times also Muslims from other ethnic groups, have suffered at the hands of the military junta, the government, and the radical preachers affecting the attitudes towards Muslims. All respondents express the gap they feel between themselves and Buddhists, both from the ethnic majority of the country, Bamar, and of the ethnic group of Rakhine Buddhists. Many feel overwhelmed and by this gap, as they have faced such suppression and neglect of among others freedom of movement, freedom of religion, and freedom to work. Chandni drew a map showing the different villages around her area, showing that there are similar numbers of Buddhist and Muslim villages mixed together in the cultivated areas of Rakhine. The last village she lived in before fleeing Myanmar, was surrounded by Buddhist villages, making it close to impossible to leave the village, and in the end impossible to stay. As Aarif expresses it:

'Back in Myanmar, it was all Buddhist, everyone was Buddhist. The army was Buddhist, the police was Buddhist, everyone else was Buddhist, and they kept making fights with the Muslims. The Muslims did not have any weapons and all Buddhists would work. We could not work, and if any of the Muslims worked, they would start fights with us. They kept telling us "This is my place, this is not your place".'

Several respondents have had to move around, as their villages have been attacked and plundered. A separation between Rohingya and Rakhines in particular, had turned into a gap based on religion. Drawing lines to the Integrated Theory of Threat (Stephan et al., 1998), this may be due to extreme generalisations and negative stereotypes of the Rohingya, leading to expanding gaps and brandings of 'otherness'. A gap widened by public figures representing the majority preach to the people that Islam is a new threat to their safety, well-being and national identity. There has been systematic violence, actively or passively encouraged by these trending attitudes, especially after 2012. Aarif used to work as a fisherman, and working at a fishing ship for some months every year, saved his life. Once, when he came back from a job at sea, what met him was an empty and destroyed village and the news that his whole family were killed:

'I used to work as a fisherman. I would work in this ship, this fishing ship, for sometimes a year, and two months at a time. One time when I came home, there was nothing. My house was gone, and my whole family was dead. This was three years ago.[...] I was the only one who was left in my village, because I went away for fishing.'

He kept repeating that he would never go back to his village, and mentioned this as answers to several unrelated questions later on in the interview. The fear and trauma of his past was evident in his voice and responses, always looking down and avoiding eye contact. Many Rohingya felt unsafe in their villages and in their homes, and have experienced harassment and fights when in public spaces. Being the weak chain in a corrupt society, especially when the lack of citizenship does not ensure your rights to be upheld, neither as citizen nor as a human. As elaborated in chapter two and three, there is research and reports conducted and published by several organisations and scholars that strongly indicate the ongoing, abusive state policies targeting the Rohingya. This includes, but is not limited to, marriage restrictions, two-child limit, restrictions of movement, and invasive monitoring and house checks. In addition to the subtraction of their citizenship, much indicates physical violence, land confiscation, unforeseen arrests, and widespread hate speech and generalisations targeting Muslim minorities. Physically, being without citizenship restricts most social services such as education, medical

treatment, traveling and work. Psychically, being stateless and excluded in your own country robs you of national identity. At the same time, not being able to provide a future for your children leads to feelings of shame. Wakar, who is now in his mid 30's, got an identity card twenty years ago, which stated he was a foreigner:

'When I was 15 I got a card. Everyone could get that card, and a lot of people had that card. It is an ID card, and they call it kepra, and it is a white card about the size of your phone, which has our photo as well. And it would say Bangla Lumeo, which means we are Bangla people, and not Myanmar. So they say we are not Myanmar, so if we meet a security person or police and they see that card, usually they would ask us to pay. If we refuse to pay, we will go to jail, and stay in jail for two days or three days. If we get caught walking around with or without the card, we would still be sked to pay, and if we cannot pay or refuse to pay, we will be jailed.'

The situation has only been worsening since this time, and especially after the 2012 violence. Before the presidential election in 2015, Rohingya had temporary citizenship documents referred to as 'white cards', which have to be renewed regularly. The renewal costs money, and some do not have the means to renew, Rashid explains: *'The cards have some kind of expiry date as well, and they have to pay to extend it, and if you are caught with an expired card, you will be jailed.'* When it was declared that 'white card' holders could vote, these cards expired, and the Rohingya were given new types of cards that did not grant them the right to vote during the election. One can in this case draw links to the unthinkable treatment of Jews beforehand and during the second World War, where those of the targeted group had to wear a star that branded them and made their vulnerable position visible. The different ethnic groups are categorised on their ID-card, which is a normal practice in several countries still to this day. However, the Rohingya do not get to be called Rohingya in their card. Instead they are called 'Bangla Muslim', making them greater outsiders than initially.

Many Rohingya have been living in societies without the freedom of movement, which has not been bendable even in cases where urgent medical treatment is necessary. Freedom of Movement also leads to education restrictions and deprivation of health care. As a stateless person, you have limited options in the country where you are oppressed. With the threats some respondents claim to have heard from government officials and military generals, the Rohingya could do nothing but accept their reality and hope for the prospects of a better one. Their land is easily lost, and when houses are damaged or people leave the country, and they lose their

right to live on Rakhine soil. The land is normally confiscated and new homes are built on their land, generally belonging to Buddhists. Wakar continues the story of his friends, who had been working as farmers, like his family:

'Our friends have land, and they are farmers. Buddhist government are coming, "don't be here, just go anywhere. This is our country, the land, the sand, everything is ours. Say anything, and we will kill.'

The Rohingya face strict work restrictions, and doing business is in most cases considered a crime, and can lead to jailing. Some women pointed out that men need a special card to do business. The card would state that you are a Buddhist with a Buddhist name, e.g. fake identification. The ones who do have this card, even though it should work as a permit, could still go to jail for doing business, Ahida states. However, several men dismissed this statement, saying no card like this exists. In their generation, including the past 30-35 years, they have not experienced that a working permit has been available to them. Their parents' generation, however, did have two different cards; one for doing business and one that allowed them to shop at the market. These cards were taken away along with their citizenship. Ahida is still a young woman, and have not lived in Myanmar since she was 10. Although her age does not make what she says less valuable, but it is an observation to take into consideration that her memories from the daily life in Myanmar are her childhood memories. From how several respondents describe the Nasaka police, they have great power and their words are the final words. Any attempts to argue against them could ensure you jail time. Ahida is suspicious that many jailings are part of a planned propaganda to raise fear and threat, so people are scared away from taking part in riots opposing the government, the law system or the Nasaka police:

'They would catch people who even had the papers, to scare everyone. I believe it is a scheme by the Buddhists, to scare people. They want us to leave, otherwise they will keep terrorising. They do not want Muslims living there.'

Some radicals have claimed the Rohingya are a real threat. The claims involve that the method of the Rohingya to spread Islam and conquer Myanmar, is by first conquering Rakhine. The radicals believe this is why the Rohingya are there. As few Rohingya have had the opportunity to enrol in regular school, and have faced harassment if they were sent to school, most Rohingya children have only had education through Qur'an school at the mosque. A high percentage of the country's high and educated positions are reserved for Buddhist residents, including lawyers, politicians and police. This is more due to corruption than law, and excluding aspects

of not having official citizenship ensure that Rohingya rarely make it to these types of positions. Wakar expresses the discrimination he feels in educational possibilities for the Rohingya:

'The Muslims people want to work in police, but everything is Buddhist. Education – Muslims only class six or seven, but Buddhists can go to university. For us, not even high school, just primary. You can go to class six or seven if you have money. If no money, then no school. Even if you have money, if you are Muslim you cannot get higher education than primary. Because they do not want to have leaders who are not Buddhist.'

After 2012, Rohingya could not attend school. Earlier on, both Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine can and have enrolled in the region's biggest university outside Sittwe. Because of the restrictions Rohingya face in raising their economic level, few people had the opportunity to enrol. Officially, the Rohingya could attend school if they had economically strong and resourceful parents or network. The exploitative system has pushed the Rohingya to become increasingly alienated and vulnerable, and prone to even heavier exploitation. This evil circle has continued until the conditions have become unliveable and further forced displacement upon them. After the conflict that broke out in 2012, Rohingya could not go to school due to severe restrictions in movement. In addition, they were denied the opportunities of attending Qur'an school at the mosque, as all mosques were closed. In effect, all education possibilities for all stateless Rohingya disappeared that year. With little money, which is the reality for most Rohingya, Zohora tells about the challenges in trying to enrol her child in school:

'My son wanted to go to school, but because the teacher is Buddhist he has to pay if he wants to go to school. We did not have the money, so when he came to school his teacher beat him up and said, "Why do you come to school? You are not allowed here".'

Every person in Myanmar have to pay to go to school, no matter what religion or ethnicity. However, the gap created by discrimination is here that people who cannot work will not have the means to send their children to school. According to respondents, teacher have at several occasions harassed non-Buddhist children for coming to school, supposedly due to their belonging to a Muslim minority. The greater the gap, the more discrimination you find in your society. The gap has led this ethnic group to no longer be welcome in school because the generalised perception is that they do not belong, and because they are perceived as a threat to the society they was previously a part of. Enrolment in school is additionally challenging when you are stateless and lack the papers needed.

Freedom of Religion is one of the main pillars of democracy, but is at the same time the biggest human rights violation and restriction the democracy of Myanmar have set for their Muslim minority. Wakar grew a beard at the age of twenty, as part of his dedication to his religion. Living in Myanmar, he was told this was not allowed to keep it. In a religious context, his beard is important to him because to him, his beard is an important religious symbolic representing his dedication in following the path and practice of Prophet Muhammad, as rooted in the 'Hadiths' [narratives of the Prophet]. For someone who view their religion as such an important aspect of their identity, being robbed of the freedom to practice your religion and make choices that is right for you in your religious practice, can be perceived as a robbery of one's identity. Zohora told about times when Muslims had gotten in trouble for gathering in religious contexts. They participants at these religious gatherings and communal prayers were told to stop calling Muslims together for prayer, and were harassed for doing so, as if it was a crime.

Marriage is very important to the Rohingya, and the women in particular. It is not common in Myanmar for Rohingya women to work. Thereby their only means of safety, both economically and physically, is through marriage. Marriage restrictions for the Rohingya are severe in Rakhine, resulting in many not being able to follow through with a marriage, normally for economic reasons, as the fees are extremely high. Zohora, a 34 year old woman, got married in Burma but expresses the difficulties, as the two parties can barely meet before they have been granted permission to marry. Ahida adds to this by telling that:

'If you have money, you can get married. If you do not have money, you cannot get married. You cannot have a relationship, you cannot have romance. Some people fall in love, and they try to sneak around, but if they are caught by the police, they will be arrested.'

Wakar wanted to get married in Myanmar over 25 years ago, but in addition to the large marriage fee, he was told he would not be allowed to marry before he removed his beard. For a combination of these two reasons, they left to Bangladesh to get married. As the law in Myanmar gives little room for movement before your official papers allowing residence in the country, he lost this with his first exit from Myanmar, making it difficult for him later on. When you leave Myanmar, you are crossed off the lists that monitor the stateless people and their belongings, and entering back to Myanmar after losing all documentation that provide right to reside there, you will face long-term imprisonment in captured upon re-entry. Wakar left three times; first time for freedom to practice his religion and to marry; second time to

escape from police and avoid jailing for doing illegal business; and a third time, to avoid getting his friend in trouble for hosting a stateless without residence permit. What made him return all these times was the hope that he could continue his life there, and that political shifts would finally give hope to the Rohingya, as this is where he considers himself native and a part of his identity is in his Rakhine roots. This underlines the understanding of roots presented by Malkki (1992), and a wish to hold on to the national and territorialised roots. It may additionally be seen as resistance to give up on the land he, as many others, considers himself a native but has increasingly been branded an immigrant. Even with resistance of the Rohingya, their powerlessness in Arakan leaves them with no chances of influencing the corrupt system.

The magnitude of the marriage restrictions in Rakhine was evident when the Rohingya refugees arrived in Aceh. As they settled in the shelters, they finally had the freedom to marry. Although they were only religiously married in the Mosque, this is enough for the Rohingya, but was not valid in Myanmar. To marry in Myanmar, one has to register at an official office under the rule of law for it to be a legal marriage, and to further be allowed to have children. If people are refused marriage under the rule of law, the only options are either to try to collect the money to get married, or to simply stay unmarried, Wakar states. Buddhists in Rakhine do not have through the same process or pay the same kind of money to marry. This makes it clear that special measures are implemented for the Rohingya, to prevent them from marrying and having children. Wakar continues to say that whenever: *'If the women go to Bangladesh, they will get married, even though it is with Bangladeshi people. Or if they run here, they will get married.'* In the first shelter visited with residents of both sexes, the toll of marriages in only a few months after their arrival was very high, and the NGO workers and volunteers had lost count. Saleena is one of the young women who got married in this camp, is now pregnant with her first baby, and is happy to finally attain the safety of having a husband. In a culture where marriage is of such great importance, especially for women, removing the opportunity to get married is a huge robbery of someone's future prospects. The only possible way to get married is to pay your way through the system. With the restrictions in work and making yourself an economic resource in the society, this is not an option for many. Several women have emphasised, if not with words, a relief with finally being able to marry and start families, and that it is good to have family and children to spend time with in the daily life they have now as refugees waiting to continue their lives. Because couples have not been allowed to marry, they have with this not been allowed to reproduce, and it seems as if this is a major reason for the vast amounts of marriages and pregnancies in the camps. Numerous women had finally become pregnant or even become

mothers after arriving in Aceh. For many of these women, marrying and having children is their biggest wish, which they previously have been denied to fulfil. It is clear, when seeing the extent to which the Rohingya embrace the freedom to marry and to have children, that this freedom has been absent from their previous lives in Myanmar.

In many aspects of the society the Rohingya in Aceh reminisce about, there are very clear signs of power abuse and corruption exploiting the weaker chain in their society. Back in Rakhine, the Rohingya were subject to regular unannounced intrusive home checks and monitoring of themselves and their belongings, down to the smallest kitchen cloth. For every item bought at the market, even food items, they have to pay the Nasaka police the same amount as they paid for the item. The Nasaka police is a state organ created, not officially but quite obvious, specifically for the Rohingya, to make sure they do not assume to have the freedom of a citizen. The politics they have been formed under are exploitative and authoritarian, and a big part of their job as immigration police and security force, is to monitor the property and belongings of the Rohingya. As the level of vulnerability and powerlessness among the Rohingya has been heightened, these state organs have become stronger and more exploitative. Ahida states that the police could come to the homes of Muslims to deliberately find belongings that could potentially be used as weapons or means of communication. Because of this, Rohingya could not be in the possession of phones, or kitchen knives and other supplies for cooking. If the Nasaka could find the items dangerous, they would effectively confiscate it. Rashid adds to this by explaining that:

‘Everything we own, that we have with us, including ourselves, has to be listed. If anything changes, if someone dies or is born, we have to report and we have to pay. Even if you have ducks or cow, if you want to eat it, you have to report and you have to pay. They will do regular checks once per week to list what is there in the house. If they see for example a knife, even though it is a kitchen knife, it is a crime, and we will be jailed. It is so easy for people to be jailed over what they own.’

The same rules apply if your house is somehow damaged, and you wish to fix it. You are initially not allowed to build a new house, and if you do have money to fix the damages, you have to show evidence of payment and pay the same amount to the police doing the check-up. Rashid told that *‘How much you pay for whatever you put on your house, the same you have to pay to the police’*. Wakar mumbles something about the Nasaka police, and says *‘This is the creation of President Thein Sein,’* Myanmar’s president from 2011 to 2016. The Rohingya have

become extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI) due to the politics in Myanmar. When the majority have the space to perform corrupt and exploitative policies towards the minority, who are already in a powerless position, they in turn get an even more vulnerable position in society. The government have, by branding the Rohingya as illegal immigrants with Foreign Registration Card (FRC) to show it, knowingly or not opened a platform where exploitation of the weak have gotten out of control. It seems to happen in every sector of society, from police, immigration, law, and security, to teachers even at preschool level. Wakar further tells about the origin of the restrictions in private property and belongings. He gives the impression that it was a scheme of the government that a Buddhist military police was shot and Muslims were blamed for the incident. Corrupt policies such as those mentioned show exactly what Stephan et al. (1998) explain in Integrated Threat Theory. A minority have been branded as a threat to such an extent that it seems commonly accepted within the majority to exploit the vulnerable in every possible respect. Recurring policies, often blaming a whole social group for incidents, lays ground to open a discussion on whether it is accidental or premeditated. Intrusive home visits and detailed property monitoring and listings began after Muslims being branded as dangerous after this incident. In addition to the detailed monitoring to ensure consistency, a system was introduced where people were fined for owning prohibited items, or if there are any changes or if the reality does not match the list. Next, you either have to pay the fine of the same amount as you paid the salesperson, or the only other option is jail. The Rohingya were often brought to the hillside to work during the British colonial rule as well, but Wakar explains that although the living conditions were rough when they were under British colonial rule, he states that it was much better than it is now and has been for the past decades. Both because the Rohingya were acknowledged as Rohingya, and because they worked in exchange for salary:

'It was even better when the British was around, during my fathers time. He is now 95 years old. When British was around, people were still taken to the mountains to work, but back then, one day work was one day pay. Now, no matter how many days you work, still no pay.'

Several male respondents have on numerous occasions been sent to the hillside in Rakhine to work during their life in Rakhine, normally for months and normally without salary. Declining to work was rarely an option, and although the 'employers' clarify that there will be no payment, the rice and water they promise their workers are rarely provided either. Many hillside workers experience illness, lowered immune system and malaria, as effects of the food- and water deprivation. Men are normally brought to work in the mountains for the same reasons, or lack

of reasons, as the random jailings. Working is thereby a form of arrest for the Rohingya, who are not allowed to work for their own benefit. It is very common to be jailed for all types of reasons in Rakhine. During a focus group with men, the communal answer to the question on whether anyone had ever been to jail in Myanmar was ‘*Yes, of course*’, as if it was completely granted and normal. It is evident that the vulnerable position of the Rohingya is and have been severely exploited by local government- and military sectors, which are often two sectors that go hand-in-hand in Myanmar. When the minority get an increasingly weaker and more vulnerable position in society, the majority becomes stronger and with this, perhaps increasingly exploitative.

Every respondent is unclear of how long one would have to stay in jail for different crimes or reasons. This may be due to no clear law putting them in jail, but rather a corrupt system around the Rohingya, as they are stateless and therefore do not have official papers. It is normal to be detained until you are bailed out with a higher amount of money than the average stateless person can easily afford to collect, due to work restrictions. This often result in people having to sell property or make deals with the police and security force that rarely benefit the Rohingya in the end, other than the fact that they can prevent family members from being obtained or tortured in prison. On the basis of what we have learned so far along the lines of exploitation, one can make explicit assumptions that this abuse of power is a scheme to slowly push the Rohingya further out of the society. More specifically to financially push the poor to a point where they have to sell their properties and make deals with the exploiters for critical financial reasons. The way Rashid present punishments and crimes, is as though he believe that these are actual crimes, which may reveal a whole lot about the legal system and discrimination happening inside this system. For instance, being Muslim and owning a phone is considered a serious crime, which is a ‘crime’ Rashid has been convicted and punished for:

‘For the crime of owning a phone, you would be chained all over. You would be handcuffed in your hands and your feet and your legs and around your neck, just for owning a phone. If you are caught inside a becak [motorcycle- or bicycle taxi], for example, it is less chains. But for differet crime, different treatment [...] Once, when I was in jail, I was beaten for seven days straight. Blood was coming out from everywhere, and I almost died [...] I was chained all over. I would be kicked repeatedly in the stomach until I threw up blood.’

Wakar continue to explain that owning a phone, and especially being caught speaking on the phone, is so strict because *'having a phone is associated with escaping'*. Rashid got emotional when telling his stories from prison. He has been jailed more than once, and have stayed in jail each time until his family were able to bail him out. He could not go to the hospital after being bailed out of jail, and his only option to get the medical treatment he needed, would be to run to Bangladesh. Arrests for crimes that are not crimes is highly common to the Rohingya, so much that their view on what crimes are has become twisted. They do however have some perspective on what their rights are and what crimes are actual crimes, in a universal understanding. Coming to a new and different society helps gain perspective on this, as you with this get away from the ideas and attitudes you have lived around and within your whole life. Practicing your religion freely is considered a crime, unless the religion is Buddhism. Rashid was arrested on his way home from Qur'an school. He was not allowed to attend normal school, so this was his only educational opportunities. When he was arrested for going to Qur'an school, he felt harassed by the police who threw his books away and arrested him. This time, he was not taken to jail, but instead got the punishment of forced labour in the hillside.

Obtaining a passport, health service, or simply keeping up with corrupted security forces in Rakhine state costs the stateless Rohingya more money than they are normally able to collect, with the restrictions in movement and lacking work opportunities. The process to be granted documents are normally very complex, and in many cases never followed through. Freedom of movement, and everything that happens in effect of this restriction, may be considered genocidal acts, as robbery of future and sometimes lives that could be saved, is a common effect. Health care deprivation and lack of money for midwives has led to many maternal deaths, which is the reason why several respondents do not have mothers, including Ahida: *'My parents died a long time ago. My mother died when I was born, she died when she gave birth to me. My father was shot around twelve years ago, when I was three years old.'* The same goes for restrictions in Marriage. Being refused the right to marry in a culture where marriage is so valued causes your life to stagnate. As you cannot have a partner by law, you cannot have children. As a woman, you lose the opportunity to gain the security of having a husband. The 1951 Genocide Convention considers restricting people of a certain group from having children a genocidal act (OHCHR, n.d-a), as elaborated in chapter three. If you do get to marry, the two-child law applied to the Rohingya, is a measure specifically imposed to prevent births within the ethnic group.

Discrimination, Physical Violence, and Genocidal Acts

Many minority groups in Myanmar have suffered at the hands of the government. The Rohingya have faced a denial of citizenship and gross human rights violations, making them the most persecuted ethnic group of all. Some scholars have called the situation of the Rohingya in Rakhine of Myanmar '*early warnings signs of genocide*'. Monitoring genocide means you need to analyse mindset to address intent, which in several ways can be challenging, as described in chapter three. Because Myanmar has been isolated from the outside world for several decades, and because these assumptions would target governments, ruling parties and presidents over this era, little hard proof is accessible. It is not before quite recent times that the international society have gained enough knowledge and insight to form opinions on the situation of the Rohingya, and what can arguably be called an initially military-encouraged genocide turning into a state-led ethnic cleansing. These politics are deeply rooted in the powerful authoritarian regimes in Myanmar, and with the military still being powerful and influential in national politics. Referring to the Integrated Threat Theory discussed in Stephan et al. (1998), the decades of attitudes being bred is what has in the end led Rohingya onto the dangerous journey crossing the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The exodus has been triggered by military threats towards Rohingya. Because Muslims have been considered an increasing threat to power, resources and well-being of the majority. Generalising hate-speech by radical Buddhist Monks who have become public figures is widening the gap between Buddhists and Muslims. This is further triggering anxiety of social interaction between the ethnic groups. On top of this, the internationally widespread fear of Islamic fanaticism has created anti-Muslim attitudes that are rapidly spreading out to the rest of the country and other Muslim minorities than the Rohingya.

In the midst of the conflict, there is emphasis on value-difference, as included in the Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al. 1998). The documents analysed in the documentary '*Genocide Agenda*' (2015) presented in chapter two and three, show official governmental publishing's and military documents that can safely be assumed to be direct discriminatory statements and extreme generalisations targeting Muslims. As it is produced and published by governmental organs, they are in the official sense in a position to write authoritatively about the subject. However, for a state government to officially take such stance is questionable, and the reasons behind initially writing documents such as these, are equally debatable. Put into a cross-cultural context, documents as anything else can potentially be misunderstood or misread. However, the meaning of some documents seem clear enough for this issue of confusions to be eliminated.

Feelings of threat have been bred throughout Myanmar, although the official number of Muslims in the country added to four percent as of 2014. Reading from these statistics, one can safely say it is not a legitimate threat for Muslims to overthrow power, as Stephan et al. (1998) discuss as one the aspect of stereotypes and realistic threats. It is equally unlikely for the Buddhist majority of 89 percent to become a minority. However, these are statements generally used in threat-propaganda, especially from the radical movement of Buddhist Monks. Despite the apparent statistics showing the opposite, the amount of generalisations increasing people's fear towards the threat of Islamisation has left the four percent excluded from society, alienated at the basis of religion and local ethnicity, and has led many into statelessness. Being branded by 'otherness', as described in chapter three, leaves people within a different level of vulnerability. Continuous statements on the belonging of the Rohingya being outside Arakan, makes the Rohingya question their roots, identity and sense of belonging. Wakar, as one of the oldest respondents, feels this vulnerability at a very personal level:

'Myanmar government, if you want to go anywhere, no problem. If you say you go, they will help you. If you say 'I am going to Malaysia', they will help you. They want us, the Muslims to go anywhere, because it is their country. They say it is not our country. They say that I am just visiting their home, and they will kill. It is not our home, they do not want us. They are angry.'

Scary generalisations have led the Rohingya to lose the social affiliation tying them to Myanmar, and have led to an extreme type of exclusion of the ethnic minority; Socially, politically and economically. Additionally, they have no access to social services such as health and education, as direct results of their movement restrictions. Robberies of freedom and right to have basic need covered enhance the feelings of fear within the Rohingya population and their societies. Actively performed persecution and discrimination by government organs and civil society adds to this fear. Ahida expresses her relief of having escaped this fear-filled life, but still remembers not being able to sleep at night:

'Where I come from, it is all Buddhists, and it was very difficult to be something else, and we were told that we were different and we could not stay. (Sighs) Because we are Muslim. It was scary to live there. We could not sleep at night, because we were afraid at night that the Buddhists will come to burn our houses. Sometimes they come to our houses and arrest. They take the men out, and then beat them up. Sometimes they take the women to the office and rape or kill them. So it was scary.'

During a focus group discussion (FGD), many detailed torture stories were told. The conversations got heated and it was clear that the women were very upset. As the co-translator of this focus group was Rohingya herself, she could relate to all these stories, which made translating it particularly challenging for her. Ahida summed up the discussions as such:

'It is difficult to translate. I get sad. They are talking about how it was always fighting. We all feel very powerless because we have nothing to defend ourselves with, only our bare hands. Often times, it is easy for the Muslims to be identified because of the way we dress. So when we meet Buddhist, the Buddhist is going to say "Oh, so you're Muslim? What are you planning to do to us?" and they want to get into a fight, the Buddhists. They always want to fight with the Muslims. And the Muslims would say "I do not want to fight you, I do not have anything to fight you with", and then the Buddhist will say "It is okay, you have your hands, let's see who wins." And then the Buddhist would say "Just go away, just don't be seen, just don't stay here", and the Muslim would try to say "Why should I go away? This is my village." and the Buddhist would say, "No, you are Muslim, you are not from here". So they fight all the time.'

As we carried on with the heated conversation about everyday discrimination, rape and the feeling of powerlessness, you could see the effect these topics had on the women present. When being situated in a currently safe place, it is easier for the women to speak of their difficult past in Myanmar. Both the feeling of safety to express the fears and horror of being severely vulnerable and exploited, and the perspective one can form from getting this reality at a distance, affect the comfort level and ability to tell stories of this nature. Living in a temporary shelter with the prospects for their future still uncertain is not ideal. However, it is in many ways better than the reality of their past. They feel safe, they can sleep at night without being filled with fear, and they know that they will have access to food and water. We heard a woman who was resting in the same room but not participating in the focus group, mumbling, *"Thank God I am alive, still now I am not dead"*, before Ahida continued to explain that:

'They have seen many women, all looking fair and beautiful, are getting taken away to get raped. Most of them died, but some escaped and got pregnant. They do not give birth, they kill the baby inside. They buy medicine to make the baby die.'

It was generally during the FGD's that the more sensitive topics were discussed. An atmosphere was created, where the participants felt safe to tell their stories. In addition to the aforementioned aspect of perceiving their future from a safer present, the lack of freedom the

Rohingya have experienced makes trusting people outside their ethnic group is an apparent challenge. The presence of fellow Rohingya that they trust creates a common ground where expressing themselves feels safer. The Rohingya women told their stories of women being subject to rape and harassment by the security force. Some of the women had witnessed men being randomly jailed, tortured and in the worst cases killed. These punishments were even for the smallest crimes that in an uncorrupted setting would not be a crime at all. Zohora, a grown woman in the camp, tells the story of when she had to watch the brutal murder of her uncle, performed by the local police forces. In addition, she has witnessed the rape and killing of women in public spaces:

'I have witnessed my uncle being arrested, and got his arm chopped off and his whole stomach split up and the organs taken out. So it was a lot of horror for me. I have seen women, beautiful women, taken from their village, tied and hung from a tree by their hands. Their clothes are taken away, so they are totally naked, and they would be raped. After that, their hair would be cut, their breasts would be cut, their cheeks... and their vaginas would be burned. Many, many women.'

The discussion continued, and everyone had horrific stories to share. Experiencing a life where such acts as these become common, makes the need to form a safe ground with people in the same situation is essential for some. This may be to have somewhere to root your identity when your national identity is taken away, as discussed in chapter three (Malkki, 1992). As mentioned previously in this chapter, through the trans-local concept (Halilovich, 2013) understandings of this context can suggest that a common background experience of the same horror and uncertainty creates a common platform. A platform to form a community in the area displaced to with people who share similar stories. Moreover, it may be to find and create a common ground to feel a sense of belonging, and no longer feel alienated from society. Ramsha expresses the discrimination, random arrests and killings for working illegally:

'If men would go to work, farming for example, they would be jailed. They will be arrested and killed, and either thrown to the sea or buried somewhere. And the Buddhists would always say to the Rohingya "This is not your place, this is not your country, just move away somewhere. Just go to the sea or something".'

It is apparent that it is a sensitive and hurtful topic for the Rohingya. Being told you do not belong from your childhood years raise questions on where to seek for belonging. Respondents express their additional feelings of powerlessness, when human security is jeopardised and they

have nowhere to seek safety, as the state and security framework that are to protect its inhabitants do not consider you part of it. Ramsha explains the hopeless and powerless situation the Rohingya were and are in in Rakhine: *'They would come to our houses first, arrest the older men in the family and the girls would be taken away [...] we can't fight, because we would be shot or cut.'* These feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness that many Rohingya relate to may have a connection to what Malkki (1992) expresses about roots and identity based on the sense of belonging. The Rohingya feel rooted in Rakhine, but have continuously been told they need to rid themselves of those roots connecting them to Myanmar, as the country is not their to put down roots in.

Numerous respondents have stories that include sudden mysterious deaths after hospital visits. Several respondents speculate around this being purposely killings targeting Rohingya. Both Wakar and Rashid state that it these are not rare incidents, and agree when Rashid tell that *'they try to kill them by giving them an injection of poison'*. These incidents may be common, but this is hard to assess from outside the context of these happenings. It may be that suspicions were raised in these cases, and that the increasing gap between the ethnic groups have created any imaginary reality. With that said, imaginary reality can be just as valuable as the facts of the matter, especially in the context of needing to create an identity to make sense of the hardship many Rohingya have experienced. This issue is either way a subject of further research, and is too big to make conclusions on in this particular study.

Fleeing, Agents and Trafficking

Based on a combination of all reasons discussed above, many reluctantly choose- or have to forcefully leave the place they above all wish to call their home but have been refused to since before most of them were born. One reason is that fleeing normally costs vast amounts of money, and many Rohingya have insufficient financial means as a result of work restrictions. Another reason is the risk of getting caught, and the consequences being caught may have. It is especially challenging if you are fleeing with children, and the risks are high even before reaching the means of escaping, both the journey to boats or to the border. Many men therefore choose to flee without their families, with hope to find work and make money to provide for the family through remittance, and save enough for them to flee by different means. Zohora did not go to Malaysia at the same time as her husband because they did not plan to escape at this particular time. They had to hide, and did not want to risk for their children to be caught by the Nasaka police. However, in 2015, she had to flee by boat, when her village was under attack.

As Rakhine is at the border of Bangladesh, some of the Rohingya that arrived in Aceh had first fled to Bangladesh, and lived in refugee camps there for everything from a few months to over twenty years, waiting for resettlement. When they all fled, both from Arakan and Bangladesh, all but a couple boats were heading to Malaysia. Some left in fishing boats from Arakan, which were mainly going to Sittwe while some were to go to Malaysia. The bigger boats had agents and took different prices for transportation. In the middle of the ocean, several boats were put together into one, and the agents left the boat with a broken ending, for the Rohingya to drift the rest of the way to Malaysia. Instead, they drifted to Aceh, and were brought in by fishermen as a big fight broke loose on the boat and it started sinking outside the shore of Aceh.

The most normal way for people with enough money to flee, is by going to Bangladesh to get a fake passport and fly from there. This is supposedly quite easy, as long as you have the means to finance it. The level of corruption in the border areas of both Myanmar and Bangladesh often allow you to pay your way, especially if you say you are on your way to a different country, and are only passing through Bangladesh. Few have money for bribes, passport and flight ticket, and many do not have time to plan their escape. For these two reasons, most Rohingya have fled by boat. Respondents have different perceptions of traffickers in charge of transportation of the Rohingya, especially when the agents were Burmese Buddhists. Wakar find that some of them might have good intentions, as they help them get out, instead of killing them beforehand or throwing them overboard:

'There are some Buddhists, Burmese, that become agents, because in a way it might be a bit more friendly, but also because they want the Rohingya's out. They do not want them to stay there, so they would help them go out.'

At the same time, Wakar and other respondents recognise that it might be money-oriented, or a way to remove the Rohingya from Rakhine without costing peoples lives. Corruption is a big issue in Rakhine, and on the Bangladeshi border, and bribes are common. As long as you can pay your way, it is normally accepted. However, if you get involved with a trafficker and do not manage to pay the whole fee within the agreed time frame, it can become a problem. When Wakar were to leave for Malaysia, he was beat up by his agent for trying to negotiate on splitting the payment in two. As Wakar told of his interactions with the agent, he showed a big scar on his forehead that continued up to a hairless scar on the top of his head.

'I had to pay to this Buddhist Burmese agent, and I was supposed to pay 4500. I had payed 4000 and said I would give the rest, the 500 ringgit in two or three days. But he

was just so angry and demanding, the Buddhist agent, that he just beat me up for the 500 I was still owing.'

This is another example showing the exploitation of the vulnerable. The system has pushed Rohingya into a position where they cannot contribute of function within the society. Most do not have education, work, money or control of their own belongings, and they further face violence when they are pushed as far as to the point of having to flee, because of these exact restrictions made for them. The refugees and migrants from Rakhine and Bangladesh were while in the sea, merged into fewer boats. Ahida tells that they started in a boat of around four hundred people, and were joined together with two other boat, amounting the passengers closer to one thousand people. The engine broke on the main boat, and the captain left with a different boat, leaving everyone to drift. Ahida tries to explain the unbearable conditions on the boat with immense amounts of people compared to the size of the boat:

'We were just sitting, and we were given food in the morning and then at night, a little bit of food. Some get sick, some died. A lot of people had fever, and they grew thin because they had a lot of stomach problems. A lot of the problems had to do with water. There was no water, and people were so thirsty, so they ended up drinking the sea water, and they get sick. [...] I remember the most that it was very difficult when it rained or was waves and storm, and then sometimes some of the kids fell out of the boat and then some of the men would jump from the boat and save them. We couldn't sleep, because everyone was so crammed up, with our heads and feet together.'

The boats met navies from Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia at several occasions. The navies normally gave food, and did not question the people on board any further once they said they were going to Malaysia while they were in Indonesian or Thai waters. Ahida tells that *'They gave help, like food and water, but they also did not pull us to the shore.'* She further remembers the feeling when she first saw Indonesian shore, and the disappointment when their hope to be pulled to the shore disappeared:

'At first, when we were drifting towards the Indonesian shore, and I started seeing trees, I was so happy, and just kept thinking "thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" Then we met Indonesian navy, and they said go on, and I started crying again.'

After meeting several navies, not knowing which waters they were in or being able to read the signs on the navy boats, and always being left to drift further, people started giving up their

wish to go to Malaysia. Despite the fact that almost all had family there already that they wished to reunite with, the feeling of hopelessness shifted their wishes to just being able to step on land again. Ahida expressed to the Malaysian navy the final time they met them in their waters and were asked where they were going, that *'I do not care where I am going. I have been on this boat for three months. I just want to step on land again. I just want to see trees again.'* Drifting to the shore of Aceh, the big boat met a fishing boat, and the fishermen asked if they were Muslim, to which they all yelled *'Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar!'* meaning 'God is great' and being a religious identifier. The Indonesian Government had decided to not receive refugees, and not having signed the conventions give them the right to refuse refugees. The fishermen that met the Rohingya at the sea wanted to help, but because of the stance of the Government, they were afraid to face arrest for doing so. Instead, they fixed the engine, but with no captain on board this was not of much help, as no passenger could steer the boat but instead left the boat spinning around. Ahida tells that at this point they started giving up hope, and people started feeling desperate:

'We started feeling convinced that we were going to die, so we started chanting the before-death prayer. There were a lot more fights, especially between the Bangla and the Rohingya. Some times it got so bad that some Bangla men would start dumping Rohingya to the sea [...] and some of the Bangladeshi started to try to make the boat leak, so more people jumping to the sea. They could not see anything, but then when the sun goes down and it was really dark, we started seeing lights from far away, and it was the boats coming.'

The conditions on the boats that took Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh were poor, especially when the journey lasted three long and tough months. The boats had hundreds of people, Rohingya and Bangladeshi, which after a while were merged into one boat, when the agents left them with a broken engine to drift further. In the midst of tire and decreasing feelings of hope for a happy ending, negative tensions increased, especially between Bangladeshi people and Rohingya. Recurring ways of expression form a common mindset creating larger gaps between the different ethnic groups, even despite the fact that most share the same religion. Bangla men are for instance never mentioned in a positive setting, compared to Bangladeshi women and children who are considered a priority along with Rohingya women and children, in the context of food rations on the boat. Rohingya are, in Myanmar categorised as Bangla Muslims in their previous Foreign Registration Card (FRC), Myanmar ID cards for immigrants. The ones who have lived in Bangladesh before coming to

Aceh, show gratitude towards Bangladesh for allowing them to seek protection in the refugee camps close to the Rakhine border. However, being associated with Bangladeshi people is evidently a sore subject for many Rohingya. Because of this, the Rohingya form many generalisations concerning Bangladeshi people, and would make statements such as Abdul saying: *'Everybody Bangla take this knife and hammer and sticks and broke the boat'* while Myanmar people jumped to the sea. Several respondents feel a need to emphasise differences, which may be because racism and gaps between ethnic group has been such a great part of their lives up to this point.

Hardship, Religion and Identity

As stated in the introduction, this chapter has embraced and analysed how the Rohingya understand their past from a safer present. In this chapter, I have, through analysis, examined how the Rohingya perceive their past and how they speak of the freedoms they were robbed of in the past, but have now.

The Rohingya have been made into a stateless and in turn extremely vulnerable minority in Rakhine. As Stephan et al (1998) discuss in the Integrated Threat Theory, the Rohingya have been slowly pushed out of society because they are perceived a threat to the security and national identity of Myanmar. The government's branding of the Rohingya as a threat to the Myanmar society have bred fear and extreme generalisations making the Rohingya weaker in society, than with robbery of freedoms alone. The system's abuse of power has opened a platform of acceptance for exploitation of the extremely vulnerable individuals within their society, up to the point of forceful displacement crossing international borders. The majority grow stronger from the weak position of the minority, and the minority in turn end up powerless in all corruption and the evil circle consisting of the many secondary effects of each single restriction set for the Rohingya. Linking it further to Stephan et al. (1998), the system has bred attitudes alienating the Rohingya, by emphasising value differences between groups, branding the ethnic minority as realistic threats to power, resources and well-being of the majority. This has led to anxiety concerning social interaction between the groups, and negative stereotypes formed awaken feelings of threat towards the minority. In conclusion, this has made the Rohingya vulnerable, and the system which made them vulnerable to begin with is the same system that is exploiting them severely.

It is evident that abuse of power is widespread within the police, immigration and security system in Myanmar. Restrictions are implemented that target the Rohingya exclusively, and the

corruption and exploitation of the vulnerable that has become widely accepted are happening under the same system that made them vulnerable in the first place. The sectors run by the military extort the Rohingya of money at every chance they get, and the minority have to pay them for everything they buy or already own and further use.

The Rohingya who are now temporarily situated in Aceh are forming understandings of the past from their current situation, and in the absence of the exploitative system and the horror of their life in Arakan. Experiencing such hardship because of the very same thing they identify strongly with, being their religion, may have a tendency to strengthen its root in their identity. The sense of identity felt by most Rohingya in Aceh is no longer, if it ever was, completely rooted in nationality and territorialised understandings. This underlines the point made by Malkki (1992) on roots not necessarily having to be merely territorialised. Their experiences from Arakan, ranging from everyday racism and discrimination to torture, murders and presumable genocidal acts, make their need for a source of strength necessary. This strength is often and increasingly rooted in religious identity. In addition, this identity is strongly rooted in the common background experiences as a Rohingya community. This illustrates the importance of being categorised as Rohingya, and the resistance by the Rohingya during the past decades of trying to hold on to what is theirs.

Through this chapter, we have gained an understanding of how the Rohingya perceive their past from a safer present, and how identity is understood from the perspective of a stateless group. Whereas this chapter has analysed vulnerability and exploitation within the society they originally reside, what will further be assessed is the vulnerability of stateless people and EVI's outside the national borders within which they have resided up until the point of fleeing. Coming to Aceh, the Rohingya have felt a new sense of freedom up to a certain point, and have gotten the opportunity to start a new life that they have not had the chance to before. However, they do not have the freedom to continue building a life, as they still have restricted movement and cannot work. The refugees know the current situation is only temporary, and that life is more or less on pause, while they wait for resettlement to a third country. In the next chapter, what will be addressed is how the future is perceived, and how identity changes in the meeting with a new society and in the uncertainty of knowing they are only situated in Aceh temporarily.

6 A world of insecurity: Persecuted, Stateless and Forcefully Displaced

This chapter will analyse the current situation of the Rohingya in Aceh, and look into how their perceptions of their future prospects have changed in the meeting with a new society and sense of freedom. Additionally, a further analysis of how their sense of identity and roots are changing as they leave their natural habitat. This is especially analysed in their meeting with a new everyday-life and chances of a new start, with freedoms they have not tasted before. Yet, they still meet restrictions that make their chances of continuing this newly started life limited. Their new everyday-life is situated in a new culture away from what have previously been the only home they have ever known. The common platform found when refugees fleeing for the same reason, with the same history and background experience, enhance a new sense of identity that make them stronger as a group. This was particularly noticed when a resettlement list was announced at the very end of my fieldwork, and seven people were chosen to be resettled to the United States of America. Along with the happiness of the long awaited opportunity to create a life for themselves, many felt sad to leave the shelter. This may be linked to the concept of trans-localism introduced in chapter three, where displaced persons form communities in the area displaced to, with people who share pre-migration and migration experiences. This sense of community found in shared identity may be enhanced further, if displacement happened due to dramatic separation from identities, as did happen to many Rohingya when they were torn from their homeland. The women I spoke with about this, said they felt a sadness because they were leaving the safety and the community with the people they have formed familial relations to after sharing these experiences. A history of hardship, and a background of discrimination and persecution because of your ethnic belonging, create a new platform to form an identity that seems to be more importantly rooted in being together than being in Rakhine or Myanmar.

National Identity vs. Cultural, Religious and Experience-based Identity

Who and what decides your identity, nationally and otherwise? Your sense of identity often defines your sense of belonging. Although most respondents feel they belong in Rakhine, it can seem as if they feel they belong in a utopian image of what Rakhine could be, and not in Rakhine in itself. The Myanmar government have at several occasions stated that they do not have, nor have ever had a minority by the name Rohingya. To them, the term 'Rohingya' has never been an official term in Myanmar, and the minority have never existed. Having this name taken away is worse to the Rohingya than not being called Myanmar people. This may be because Arakan used to be an independent kingdom, and with the wall of mountains separating it from the rest

of Myanmar, Arakan and the rest of Myanmar have not had much correlation other than belonging under a shared political system. The name 'Rohingya' is however very important for them to keep, as this is the unifying name of the ethnic group they deeply identify with. Wakar is one of the oldest respondents, who has experienced Myanmar through several different presidents. Although his life has consisted of much hardship, he still considers Rakhine a big part of his identity:

'I am born in Arakan. Now I am 35 [...] We are Arakani Rohingya. We are saying "We are Rohingya", but they are saying "You are Arakani, not Rohingya". They are saying Arakan is not Myanmar. If we agree, no problem. If we say we are Myanmar people, it will be a problem.'

Arakan was conquered by Myanmar in the end of the 18th century, with displeasure from Arakanese leaders, as explained in chapter two. With almost 150 years of Myanmar being occupied by other countries, it has not purely been under Myanmar rule for long. Some emphasise that they are Arakan people, and not necessarily Myanmar people, but many find importance in their identity being rooted in Myanmar. In several cases, it is because they wish to have and keep their roots in the place they are from, and the place of their ancestors, underlining Malkki's (1992) points on territorialised roots. It may also be because they used to have citizenship in the country, but had it taken away and are continuously told they do not belong, that some feel a greater need to claim it as their own motherland. It is not necessarily always a national disidentification that is happening. Rather, it may be that the Rohingya have a strong ethnic and religious identity with deep roots in common background of hardship faced because of just these two aspects of their identity. The Rohingya are an ethnic group with a separate language, who mainly live only in the Arakan region, and this is the only home most of them know and had ever known before their arrival in Aceh. Despite this, they have been told their whole lives that they do not belong. The sense of national identity is often the reason why some choose to stay behind, although life is tough there. This underlines what Malkki (1992) writes about territorialized roots, in addition to a sense of resistance towards the powers alienating the Rohingya by pushing them further out of society. They wish to keep faith in a time coming when Muslims and Buddhists will be at peace with sharing the land of Myanmar, and when the Rohingya will be considered as equals in terms of rights and belonging. Questioning respondents on why some of their family members and neighbours choose to stay when they get an opportunity to leave with their friends and family, we were told by Chandni that:

'They still want to stay, because they feel it is where they live. "I was born here, and if I have to die, I can die here. My family have lived here for generations, so why should I go?" Maybe they still have hope for things to change, so they are patient. The conflict is not every day, so sometimes they still hope.'

This statement underlines the willingness of many Rohingya to fight, and even to die for their name and identity, before they ever give up. Out of the Rohingya people who did flee the country, and are now in Aceh, many feel like Arakan and Myanmar should be part of their identity, but feel distanced from it at the same time. This shows the complexity in defining identity as something merely territorialized, placing displaced people in a generalised condition of homelessness, as elaborated in Malkki (1992). Wakar continues to emphasise his identity rooted in his nationality, and his wish for Myanmar to be a country he can call his: *'Myanmar country is my national country. I am born in Myanmar, so I want it to be my country. The country is mine.'* The Rohingya language is different from the official Myanmar language, and different from the language of the other, biggest ethnic group in Rakhine state, the Rakhine Buddhists. The Rohingya tend to call Myanmar language Buddhist language. The Buddhists in Rakhine have more similar language to the Rohingya, and they can easily communicate. The fact that the ethnic group have their own language, culture, and sense of identity, makes it clear that these people are an ethnic group who have shared the same society for a long time. It is apparent that the Rohingya are not recent illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, or a group to be considered as a new Islamic influence threatening the Majority of Myanmar. As most people living in Rakhine have ancestors that arrived during British colonial era when it was free movement and settlement, and through trade beforehand of this, the Rakhine language and the Rohingya language both have influences from several neighbouring countries.

All respondents emphasise religion when speaking of identity, and when assessing differences between groups of people, especially Buddhists versus Muslims in a Rakhine setting. All respondents put heavy emphasis on religion when speaking of identity, and when telling about differences between people, especially Buddhists and Muslims. This makes it problematic to imagine how the reality of the issues is, and how the relations between people actually are. It is apparent that views that different religious belonging make you different from those of other groups are widespread. It is however challenging to assess outside the context, whether it is the Military and Nasaka police versus Muslims, in addition to some obvious discrimination outside this, or if it is actually all Buddhists versus all Muslims. In cases such as these, we can see similarities to the topics discussed at the end of chapter five. Because of hardship,

discrimination and alienation, understandings of situations may be enhanced to strengthen the sense of belonging and identity rooted in Rakhine. With that said, I wish to emphasise again that these ‘imagined’ or reinforced realities are not less valuable than other realities. It is their understandings, as individuals or as a group, and developed as a defense- or tackle mechanism or not.

As Malkki (1992) suggests, identity is always mobile and processual, and is normally a social construct in combination with numerous other contributing factors. Identity rooted in religion becomes more visible when questions were posed on who provided food while they were on the boats. Many did not know anything but that they were fishermen, but some answered that it was Thai people for the most part, because they were in Thai seas for much of the time. When the follow-up question was posed, asking whether these were Thai Buddhists, the answer was *yes*, but as soon as questions were asked on Buddhists maybe being good, as the Thai Buddhists were good and gave food, this concluding suggestion was rejected fully. The suggestion was further replaced with explanations that Malaysian Muslim gave food to Thailand so they could provide the people on the boat with this food. This may display the Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al., 1998), only in reverse. The Rohingya have developed prejudice towards Buddhists, and do not trust or believe in those of that religion in general terms, not only in the context of Myanmar. Religion can be dividing or unifying, and a strong factor in both. The belief that their faith helped the Rohingya through much of the hardship is consistent, and Ahida expressed her belief that people helped by providing food and water because they always pray:

‘Sometimes when we prayed, then maybe sometimes they would come with water. If we see a boat, we would scream and ask for help. Sometimes two boats in one day, sometimes four boats. They always give, because we always pray.’

Religion is evidently a very large part of the Rohingya identity, and this is very deeply rooted in their minds. This may be because they have experienced discrimination and have been persecuted because of their religion. It may also be because religion has been the one unifying aspect they have had in their lives. They have their faith as the one thing that is constant and that no one can take away from them. Their faith is believed to be the aspect making them strong enough to live through this in belief that God has a plan and that everything will work out in the end. Faith probably has much of the credit for the patience found in many of these people, patience in belief that there is a higher plan. The religion aspect is similarly found in

people's perceptions of bad occurrences, like sickness or bad dreams. Ahida, for instance, reasons this with skipping prayers:

'Sometimes I have nightmare about Buddhist attack. I had a nightmare three days ago, that a Buddhist came and I dreamt the Buddhist kicked me. I felt like it was real. I forgot I was here. Oooh, I feel pain. I forgot it was not real. It is probably because I forgot to pray before I sleep, that I got that dream.'

The same goes for bigger and less personal occurrences, like conflicted tension between Rakhine Buddhists and Bamar Buddhists in more recent times. Wakar states that this is because of disagreements on the former president's politics. He continues to say he believes the countries that help the Rohingya will be in safety of conflict and natural disasters in the future, referring to the tsunami that hit Aceh in 2004. The same goes for understandings when it is the other way around, that those who treat them poorly, like Myanmar, will somehow be punished by God. He says that recently, in Myanmar there was *'a flood that killed a lot of Buddhists. I feel like this was God's punishment for them, so they can feel the pain'*. Several respondents have expressed their belief that a reason why the Rohingya manage to stay strong, and live through this, is because of their faith, and because they believe that God has a plan with whatever is happening. God's will is what is going to save them in the end. Wakar utters that: *'We have a strong faith in our religion, and it is Islam, and that is what makes us different'*.

In chapter three, Kunz's view that people having to flee because of their religion may be voluntary migrants because of their strong wish to maintain their religious identity, is stated in relation to the theory of reactive migration (Richmond, 1993:2). Identity and roots are vital for human beings, and for some people, their religion is a big part of who they are. As settled so far in this analysis, religion has great importance to the Rohingya, as it often may especially be to extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI's). Humans experiencing crisis, who have somehow lost faith in reaching out to humanity for help, seek help with a higher power. Secular countries are normally wealthy countries, which may have a correlation with their lack of 'need' for religion and faith to believe things will work out. None of the Rohingya expressed their opinions about this topic, but one Acehese man said that he believes Acehese people are religious because they have experienced a lot of hardship. The local government of Aceh rule by Shari'a law, making religion an even more important aspect for their society. Their hardship include decades of conflict, and the tsunami killing thousands of people, leaving homes and families ruined. This man specifically said, *"Sometimes we need to believe that our religion can help*

us, because we can no longer believe other humans will". Although these are not the words of a Rohingya, I believe the contexts have certain similarities, although they are so very different, and the relevance of this statement is present. Many respondents emphasize the differences in people and different religions, and speak as though it separates people so much that they cannot live together. With their history and the dark side of the general culture of their motherland, these attitudes being bred is a natural effect.

Identity in the Meeting with Aceh and Waiting for Resettlement

With an intent to examine how threat attitudes in the reception and presence of Refugees, what was found in Aceh was a positive surprise. With the knowledge that Aceh is a Muslim society, and quite strictly so, beforehand preconceptions were made that the presence of Muslim refugees would not pose the threat that many other societies show fear of. The Acehnese communities surrounding the shelters have been very welcoming, but there are some conflicting ideals on how to manage camps in areas that are mainly very poor. Leyla emphasises the importance of finding a balance, so the local people of Aceh do not think they are not cared for, when the Rohingya get the assistance in form of health service, food and even education, and right outside the borders of the camps, there are people who can barely put food on their family table. One solution they have come up with, is inviting the local community to participate in activities, like sowing class, so they can both get opportunities to join activities and get to know the Rohingya. This is a method to better integrate the Rohingya into the community as well, although they are not likely to stay in Aceh for long.

As people lacking citizenship, the Rohingya have faced numerous restrictions in their life so far. With citizenship, you get to contribute in a society, instead of being involuntarily put on the side-line. The Rohingya have the opportunity to get basic education and courses in the shelters. This gives the refugees a feeling of getting a new start, and being able to at least begin a new life. As many have not had the opportunity to attend school in Myanmar, there is a widespread eagerness and excitement for education opportunities retained in the temporary shelter in Aceh. This especially includes English lessons, much because some respondents feel a great wish to share the story of the Rohingya with the world. With this, some believe that deprivation of higher education opportunities, and sometimes even school enrolment, has roots in a public wish for the Rohingya to not to be able to tell the world their story and about their history of discrimination in Myanmar. Wakar has no education from Myanmar, and as a grown

man with years of experiencing life in Arakan and life on the run, being able to tell his story is a big wish of his:

'I really want so much to learn English, so I can tell the story of the Rohingya. To be able to tell what happened since which president, and how it started happening. [...] The Buddhists think that if they are able to learn, then they will be able to tell the story of what happened, so that's why they closed all the schools. [...] Omar, who speaks English here, he can tell you the story, but he does not know the suffering like I do. What it feels like to be arrested, and to have to work for nothing. Both Abdul and Omar had escaped when they were so young.'

Many Rohingya show their gratitude towards the Acehnese for giving them opportunities of a new life, both by saving them from the sinking boat and for their lives in the camps. The conditions in the Acehnese Rohingya shelters are good compared to many refugee camps, but they still live restricted lives. Simultaneously, there is a constant restlessness in not knowing what comes next. Being a refugee means you create roots in every place you reside, even temporarily, as Malkki (1992) elaborates. Memories of another place and time, and attachments formed in new soil where roots have grown. Those memories can be of a utopian homeland you wish you could reside in, a homeland you never wish to return to, or memories reminding you that you still have physical roots and family still residing in the area you fled. Abdul expresses how he is happy he is in Aceh, but still feel guilt for having it so good while his family is in crisis:

'We are not forgetting that Aceh people gave us new life. Always remember. If it was not for them, everybody would be dead on the sea. [...] My family is still in crisis. I am always thinking, always crying, because they are there and I am here. I am always thinking that the people here gave me a new life.'

In addition to opportunities in the shelters, many respondents and especially women express their gratitude for finally feeling safe when they sleep. The women's shelter have more strict restriction in movement outside the shelter than the other shelters. These restrictions are introduced for the safety of the women in addition to the fact that the Rohingya do not have papers to show the immigration authorities if caught outside the camps. Other than these restrictions, Ahida is content with being in the shelter:

'The best thing [about being here] is not having to be afraid that the Buddhists will come hurt us. I am not worried. I feel good that there is security protecting us so not everyone can come in. So it is good. I sleep well. Everyone sleep well now. Not afraid.'

The safety respondents feel, may be a sign that they are slowly reterritorializing their identity. This may either be to belong anywhere else than Arakan, or reterritorialization in displacement and in a refugee camp, as suggested in Malkki (1992). Most respondents feel the weight of fear being removed from their shoulders, but some have bigger difficulties than other does in putting past thoughts and fears behind. Many express a feeling of guilt for being in refugee camp, and having reached a new country where they have safety and food, when their families are still in Myanmar. Especially because the plan was to find work, to be able to send money home, for the family to survive. No matter how much identities are redefined, the Rohingya will always to some extent have some identity rooted in Rakhine. Some wish to collect money for the family to flee, preferably by safer means than months onboard a boat, as all the Rohingya currently residing in Aceh had to. In Aceh, they are without the opportunity to work, but they are living with safer surroundings.

'I should be happy here, everything is fine, but I cannot sleep. It is hard to think about my family back home. They are living a difficult life. They get beaten by Buddhists. So I just go quiet most of the time, because I think about them. It is very difficult. [...] Even for us, [if] the family member that are still in Burma suffer, we also suffer. [...] Every time I talk to my family, they would tell me how lucky I am here and that it is hard living there. Every time they feel like they would be attacked. In here, all I do is eat, pray, sleep. So it is terrible. My brothers are all married, so I have eight older siblings. My brothers are all married, but they only have one house to live in, so there are 27 people in that house. And I am here.'

Rashid continue to tell about his current situation and feelings of guilt. Some respondents are traumatised by past events, which are often enhanced by the remembrance that family members are still living in the same society that caused you so much pain. These thoughts and worries seem to often lead to sleep deprivation. Rashid is one respondent who feels this weight of guilt combined with trauma. Prolongued refugee status can often have psychological effects, as explained in chapter three (Halilovich, 2013), due to among others the experienced hardship and feelings of guilt. He is also the most frequently jailed respondent. He is saying things such as: *'My body tries to fall asleep, but then my mind pulls me back out of it,'* which show quite

clear signs of trauma. Rashid lost both his parents in his teen years, and struggles much with the fact that they are dead and the reasons why they passed away:

'My dad passed away in 2007, and my mom passed away in 2011. They both suffered the same thing. They were both so depressed and stressed out that they went insane. I tried to save my dad, going to Bangladesh, but when I got to Bangladesh hospital, the doctor said that my father suffered too severe brain damage. And he died one day after. And it was the same with my mom. I remember the time when I was still in jail for having the phone, and I was beaten out, and fell I might have the same brain damage as well, maybe, from being beaten out. My parents bailed me out, and now they are all gone, and I can't sleep thinking about that.'

The guilt felt for family members who remain in Arakan, and the memories from the respondent's past lives, make the waiting and uncertainty unbearable for many. Most of the women seem to seek much comfort in each other and their community inside the shelters, and most have generally not had the same traumatic experiences as some of the men have, as women normally stay at home in their culture. Some women are very quiet, but this does not have to mean anything beyond it being their individual personality traits.

Growing up in a society where violence is a habit, and additionally losing all forms of societal structure, forms you as a person and how you function in a society. The Rohingya had a community system when they first arrived in Aceh, and were still hundreds of people in one camp. In a sense, the Rohingya have had to build up a new community, although the shelters are only temporary, and they would have to break up this community within short time. Leyla from ACT tells that there are fights almost every day, explaining that it may be a habit to them, and that it is much because the Rohingya do not have a community leader. The 'leader' they used to have that would mediate conflicts, has now fled to Malaysia. Although there are several NGO's present, they currently do not have a set system between the residents in the shelters. This is especially due to many people fleeing and new people arriving, either from other camps or from new boats arriving. The daily life is easier in the shelters than what the Rohingya have experienced before, although it is with certain restrictions. The created community structure may be read in accordance with what Malkki (1992) explains on constructing an alternative identity away from the territorialised sense, or creating lives located in the present circumstances, not fully rooted in the past.

Fleeing Aceh – Vulnerability and Trafficking

The protection of human rights in the case of refugees and stateless people is important, but many often fall outside the system of protection, as they do not have identity papers or are registered within any system. It is important to ensure active compliance within the spirit of international human rights law and ethical standards. This is maybe where the relevance to ‘development management’ and sustainable development in general is strongest. When countries sit on the side-line, refuse to take responsibility and provide protection, or even close their borders completely, so millions of people remain stateless and lack protection, it becomes a global issue.

As soon as people choose to flee, they normally become involved with traffickers, to be able to find means of transport to leave. These chains are normally built up by many links, from several different countries. A form of agent bureaucracy based on bribes and corruption, making the security system even weaker. Many refugees end up in worse destinies than the ones on which my study is based, and one could even say the Rohingya in Aceh are some of the luckier ones. Human trafficking is a severe problem affecting stateless people, who have their vulnerability taken advantage of by sex traffickers, forced labour, stealing of organs etc. Several times during the fieldwork, stories and photographs were presented, of people who had ended up having their organs stolen. Usually, no one in the camps could identify the people who were pictured, but a few times it was people who had shared parts of the same journey with people from the same group that ended up in Aceh, or even people who ended up in Aceh but continued their journey towards Malaysia, with the help of traffickers. A high percentage of Rohingya that arrived in Aceh last year, have chosen to flee from the shelters to continue their journey to the initial goal destination, Malaysia, to reunite with family residing there and to find work. Leyla reflect with us on why people choose to leave, but it is rarely more complicated than a wish to get to their goal destination, normally to reunite with family:

‘Their purpose was not to go to Aceh. Their purpose was Malaysia. After three months, they tried to escape, because they still want to go to Malaysia. Many have family in Malaysia, so although they feel comfort here, they still want to be together with their family. It is so natural, right?’

What Leyla explains here, may reflect a wish to take root in the future in a place where you have your whole family within safety. With family spread in several different countries and situations, many cannot escape the restlessness created by worry and guilt. Escaping is risky,

even before reaching the boats and meeting the agents. If you are caught without identification documents in Indonesia, you will be detained by the immigration authorities. Leyla explains that they cannot control people, and if they wish to escape that is their own choice. However, they do inform refugees of the risks of escaping, and that patiently waiting will in the end be the safer choice for them, although it can be hard at times, when you do not know for how long you will have to wait. Daw is one of the respondents whose close friends have already left the shelter in Aceh to go to Malaysia. He himself tried to flee once, but was caught outside without papers, and sent back. He says he is now staying patient in waiting for resettlement instead of taking the risk of fleeing:

'Life is good here, but people leave because they cannot find a job. We are not allowed to work here, so people get frustrated. We need to get the card to work, and they are asking us to be patient and we will get it.'

Daw continues to say that *'I wait because I believe in God. I am patient.'* His lips are shaking, and he is biting his lip while forcing a smile. *'We are promised that when we get the card, we can work everywhere. Malaysia, Syria, Indonesia.'* He is here referring to the resettlement card by UNHCR. The NGO's working closely with the refugees in the shelter are continuously reminding the Rohingya of the dangers of involving themselves with traffickers. They emphasise the importance of being patient instead of risking to end up in different destinies than promised by agents. An effect of statelessness is that there is little track kept on what happens to you, and in this case especially when people leave Rakhine. As a stateless refugee, you are not registered anywhere, and Rohingya are crossed off the residence list as soon as they leave Myanmar, or sometimes even as soon as they leave their village to go to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine.

Bisma, a young woman who fled with her child to reunite with her husband in Malaysia, had her child kidnapped when arriving in the first temporary shelter in Aceh. One can assume that missing people, maybe especially children, is not a rare incident. Because of presence of police and security in Aceh related to the reception of the new refugees in the province, she was lucky enough to retrieve her child the next day. Several cases has been reported, where refugees have ended up in the hands of different types of human traffickers, in addition to the traffickers who smuggle and transport refugees out of the country. These include stealing of organs, and an NGO worker in Aceh told us, as he showed a photo of a man who was killed after being trafficked in this very way. Cases like these are shared at a means of social media the Rohingya

refugees use to keep updated and keep track of incidents concerning other Rohingya worldwide. These are clear indications of the mentioned vulnerability experienced by stateless people crossing international borders, when they are not protected by any legal system.

Abdul has lived as a registered refugee in a UNHCR run camp in Bangladesh almost his whole life, and have been told to wait in patience for resettlement for the past 20 years. In this camp, he got the opportunity to get some education, along with the security of food. His father was killed when Abdul was a child, and with the difficulties in providing for the family as a Rohingya woman, making a living got so challenging that they in turn saw themselves forced to leave the society they were living in. On the question on why he chose to leave for Malaysia, and leave the security, education and food in the Bangladeshi camp, Abdul shyly chuckled, before he answered:

'For twenty years I was living in the camp in Bangladesh. I have nothing money. I have nothing education. [...] I want to study, I want to make money, and maybe I could get a job there. They [UNHCR] said maybe two years, three years, we would move to a third country. Many people already move to Canada, and other places, but after twenty years, I was still there. That is a long time [...] so I thought it would be better to try to go to Malaysia.'

Many respondents have relatives and friends with the same story as Abdul, who have lived in refugee camps for decades. This may be a reason why some do not trust the encouragement by NGO's to stay patient. Many refugees do not wish to take root in refugee camps, as it is a temporary stage in the process of recreating a life in a safer environment with more opportunities. Some may fear that the waiting is going to keep extending, and therefore choose to take the risk of fleeing to Malaysia. Most Rohingya find it most important to work and earn money, both to provide for their family members where they are, and to give their children more opportunities than they have had. Furthermore, many feel a need to support their family members in Arakan who have not yet and maybe never will leave Arakan.

National, International and Intergovernmental Negotiations

Protection of stateless people is an essential issue to be resolved in order to ensure sustainability at a global level. There have been notable examples where situations revolving statelessness have been resolved through political will. With UNHCR as a reference, examples outside this context can be presented. For instance, the cases of some 300,000 stateless Biharis were

resolved in Bangladesh in 2008. UNHCR (2016a) write that between 2003 and 2013, *'action by states led to more than 4 million stateless people acquiring a nationality or having their nationality confirmed.'* Further, their numbers show that between 2011 and 2014, *there were 44 accessions to the two conventions on statelessness – an increase that will lead to more action to protect stateless people, resolve their predicament and prevent new cases from occurring'* (UNHCR, 2016a).

Wakar is the only respondent who has reflected around international aid and involvement, beyond the thoughts that international attention around the Rohingya stranded at sea helped give more attention to Aung San Suu Kyi during the election. Wakar is the only respondent with any statement on Myanmar's membership in the intergovernmental organisation ASEAN:

'There are maybe 55-80 people coming to Myanmar from different background, Muslims, Buddhists, telling "What is the problem? Why are you doing this? If the problem is ethnicity, language, everyone else in the world would have been in conflict, so why can't you solve this?" The Myanmar government act nice in front of them, but then they say to us that by the time the new president is over, there will be no Rohingya anymore. So they lie. The Myanmar government are not afraid. They feel like it is their own country, they feel like they are not a part of ASEAN, and they are getting help from the Chinese government. The Myanmar government give China gold, and in turn they get weapons from China. So that is how it is now.'

On the more specific question on how he view ASEANs positioning when it comes to the Rohingya, and how they try to intervene, Wakar answers that he does not think much is done. Nothing other than the recent responsibilities ASEAN member countries have taken on when boats started sinking and Rohingya refugees started needing acute humanitarian aid and shelter. Bangladesh is not an ASEAN member country, but a neighbouring country of whom the responsibilities should be discussed. In the late 1990s, the Bangladeshi government changed their policies concerning Rohingya refugees. To avoid appealing more refugees to come to Bangladesh, they no longer accepted refugees to the registered refugee camps, and everyone who arrived after this is still unregistered, making the protection system around them even weaker. Speaking to Abdul and Wakar simultaneously, one being registered refugee and the other being unregistered, Wakar tells me he lived in a refugee camp in Bangladesh for almost ten years, and Abdul continues: *'I am registered Rohingya refugee. He is unregistered Rohingya refugee [...] because we are coming before 1994, in 1992, and at that time everybody*

is registered. After, in 2003, 2005, 2010, everybody coming is unregistered'. The policies adopted by the Bangladeshi government may be clearly linked to the what Stephan et al. (1998) discuss, in relation to feelings of threat surpassing the feelings of responsibilities regarding the security of stateless people. Such policies are visible in how many nations meet refugee related issues. They are often driven by a fear of foreign influence in vast extents will threaten the values, culture and security in their country. At the same time, many are hesitant because they do not wish to send out signals that their borders are open. Risking people's lives as a political method to control the signals sent out of the country, is again often compelled by feelings of threat. Solutions should ultimately start in Identifying constraints that hinder effective changes and implementation of improving policies in the environment where the root causes are created. However, when problems are so deeply rooted, and solutions are too distant, there is a need for the international society to take responsibility of stateless people who have fallen out of the system they ought to belong.

Prospects of Returning to Myanmar

Whenever respondents were asked if they ever wanted to go back, some were hesitant in asking and some were definite, but they always ended with *no*. All are convinced that if the situation ever change, it is only on the surface. Furthermore, statements that discrimination will or has stopped and other statements of this nature will only be lies. At the same time, all the hesitation before landing on this answer can be connected to the feelings of rootedness in Rakhine, and a wish to keep it as their homeland, as elaborated by Malkki (1992). Aarif, the fisherman who came home from work to find no village or family left, was asked on what he would want for his future. If the situation was ever solved and improved for them in Myanmar, would he then consider going back to his country. He kept consistently saying he never would, almost seeming fearful of the question. Some have faith in change, but while most do not, they all still wish for Myanmar to change for the better, even if they do not want to go back. Ahida shares her reflections on the topic of the corrupt government being root cause of their situation:

'If the government is good, Buddhists are good. The government not good, Buddhists are not good. Like a dog's tail, it is like a fixed curve that you cannot straighten. You know how a dog's tail is never straight – it is always curved. It is like that with the Myanmar government, it is impossible to be kind and good. Their international position, of course they are saying they are not treating Rohingya bad, but it is just a lip service.

It is not like that in reality. It is their natural instinct to make problems with the Muslims. It is like a cat who always go look for the dried fish'.

Ahida uses these metaphors to explain that the issues in Myanmar have deeper roots than religious differences, and that the bigger problem is national politics. Above all, the real danger is when you mix the two: religion and politics. Many statements make it clear that the government are putting much effort into upholding an image to the outside world that may not necessarily match the reality of what happens within the national borders. With the recent political shift, the respondents have different attitudes and expectations, especially to the internationally recognised Aung San Suu Kyi. Some have faith in Suu Kyi as a political leader, and hope she will stand up for the Rohingya, but others think she is too weak to make a change. Those who have faith in her, do mainly because they remember her father's efforts and sacrifices for the country, even though this was before their time. As Suu Kyi had not publically taken a stand on the situation in Rakhine state before this fieldwork was conducted, no one knew what to expect, or whether or not she would side with the Buddhist radicals or fight for the rights of the Rohingya. She is considered the biggest advocate for democracy that Myanmar have today, but does not specifically claim to do everything in her power to prevent human rights abuses or improve the situation of the Rohingya. Recent speeches and standpoint claims of Suu Kyi, who have previously kept silent and neutral, have led people to make assumptions that prove otherwise. However, it is too soon to make any claims at this point.

The way politicians and official figures speak of the Rohingya, and of Muslims in general are often degrading and weighed down by a sense of threat, which underlines the points made by Stephan et al. (1998). There are reasons to assume that political and state forces are at play that provoke violence, and in some cases, including that of the Rohingya, active and passive violence and human rights abuses that could amount to the crime of genocide. Officially, the country is no longer a dictatorship, and the living conditions should have improved for most, in the sense of greater freedom. However, the power of the military still has strong roots and is a state organ with vast amounts of power in national politics in practice. Wakar hopes the end of military rule, officially or unofficially is finally over, and say that: *'For the past 55 years, it is the military ruling the government. This is the 56th year, and it seems like it is the end'*. Wakar have experienced Rakhine under several political rules, and he states that although it is hard to know, he wants to keep his hope up that this will be a new era for the Rohingya. Yet, he still has his doubts:

'I do not really know right now, being away from home. From what I see on the internet, it seems that she is nice, but I do not know how that is in reality. We do not know, maybe she speaks nicely, but we do not know what is in her heart.'

It is often expected that public people of Myanmar put up a different facade from what reflects the reality of the situations inside the country. Therefore, many have simply lost trust in politicians and public people. In addition to this general façade, there has been much propaganda in national media and government reports. The level of corruption within those sectors make people sceptic when choosing what to believe and not. There have presumably been released threats from military generals aimed mainly towards the Rohingya, in addition to rumours being spread that the military plan to make her power position short-lived. Wakar sum up some of these rumours by stating that:

'There are provocations from the military that say, "Just wait and see how long she will stay in power. Once she is out of power, there will be no more Rohingya left. The military general says this. They are spreading rumours that they won't make her stay long, and once she is not in power anymore, there will be no more to protect the Rohingya. I don't know if she is protecting the Rohingya. She will start exercising power in February, so we will wait and see. The military doesn't like her.'

Respondents have different views on what the reasons may be for the policies in Myanmar being as they are, and for the amount of ethnic discrimination evident in their society. Many see their identity deeply rooted in their religion, and can say things similar to *'all Muslims are like this, and all Buddhists would do or say that'*, as if religion is the one and only thing that defines you. When you are grown up in a society that tells you your people are less worth because you are not of the 'right' religion to be allowed to carry the national identity, it is comprehensible that the society has developed in this direction, and that it's society see these gaps as defining. However, although most respondents viewed every Buddhist as bad and the enemy, and despite what geographical area they are from, a couple respondents did point out that it is not actually the religion that is the core problem, but the national politics in Myanmar. Although Wakar claims Buddhist politics is the problem, it is evident in many of his arguments that he is a very politically aware man, and he later acknowledges that it does have to do with politics more than religion in itself:

'There is no problem with Buddhists and Muslims in other places, it is only in Myanmar. In Indonesia, there are Buddhists, in Malaysia there are Buddhists, in Thailand there

are Buddhists, but there is no problem. Everyone is okay with each other [...] It is Buddhist politics. It is a problem [...] There are different kinds of Buddhists. For example, in Islam there is Hanafi, the Safi's school of thought. In there, the Rakhine Buddhists are different from the Burmese Buddhists.'

There is a common understanding that nothing will be solved by returning to Myanmar, and respondents hope those in charge of their fate from here share the same understanding. Ahida shares her disbelief that the Rohingya have any future prospects in Myanmar:

'American, Indonesian, Malaysian government seem to want to help the Rohingya, but if what they want is to bring us back to Myanmar... In Myanmar there is only Myanmar government, so our fate is not good there. It will be the same again, we will just be shot again, and be treated really bad. It might be better governments again, but it is not solving the conflict by sending us back there.'

Asking Leyla about returning of Rohingya, she is really hesitant in saying yes, as the situation is as bad as it is and potential improvement seems too distant still. In the end, she says that: *'I think it is better for all people to stay in their country. Some of them say it, but the reason is just for the family. It is not easy to live far away from your family.'* They talk of themselves as Rohingya, and identify themselves as Rohingya, more than Myanmar people, Leyla says. This underlines the formerly discussed importance the name 'Rohingya' has for their sense of identity, and the resistance shown by the ethnic group when the name has been attempted removed. The ones who have considered the possibility of returning are generally older and seem to have a different connection to the country, such as Wakar. Wakar has given the thought of returning extensive reflection, and has a list of criterions needed for return to be a possible outcome:

'Number one, if the Rohingya is Muslim, they don't give the card. Number two, it is my Islam. We want to pray, but they are not allowing. Number three, the Arakani Buddhist military come and take out cows, out ducks, our land. Many, many insults at home. Number four, if you are Muslim, you cannot be police, soldier, doctor, engineer. Number five, I want to go to Bangladesh, India, to have a passport. Number six, the Myanmar can get married. This generation of girls are not married. If they want to, they are told 'no, go away'... If everything is okay, yes we want to go to Myanmar. Maybe there is no solution in Myanmar. After everybody of us are dead, and we have sons and babies and they are bigger, then maybe.'

Waiting for Resettlement – Future Prospects for the Rohingya

The Rohingya have only received a temporary residence permit in Aceh, providing them shelter for one year. Aceh was not initially a final destination for the respondents, and their boat was on the way to Malaysia, before the motor broke and the boat started drifting in the wrong direction and started sinking outside the shore of Aceh. Because of the way the Rohingya were welcomed by Acehnese communities, numerous people now wish to stay in Indonesia, and feel like they already have a ground to form a new identity in Aceh. The welcoming and friendly behaviour and acts of Acehnese people have made many of the Rohingya change their minds on where they want to live. Abdul told us that: *'I am thinking I don't want to go to Malaysia anymore. I want to stay in Indonesia'*. Automatically taking root in a place because of presence in a place over time is one thing, but the Rohingya show a wish to take root in a certain place that evoke feelings of comfort and a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging found in Aceh, making several Rohingya now wish to stay there, is likely to be much because they share the same religion, and a large part of their identity is rooted in religion. This is the one thing that has always been constant, although they have faced many difficulties because of just this. Abdul continue:

'I know 50 people in here that does not want to go to Malaysia. They want to live here. They are waiting for UNHCR, hoping that their decision is the best decision. UNHCR, although everything is slow, they are still good. We will just wait and see.'

Leyla, as a volunteer in one of the shelters tells us that as for resettlement, there is no specific plan yet, and that UNHCR are in charge of and sit on all information on this. As Indonesia has not signed the conventions regarding asylum, they can in official terms rightfully decline. The NGO workers, as well as most local Acehnese seem positive about Aceh taking the refugees ashore and challenging how Indonesia position themselves in the regional discussions on responsibility. The NGOs have their own projects to contribute, especially in raising awareness on the serious issue. Meanwhile, as small NGO's cannot contribute to a vast extent in the bigger picture, the NGO-workers in Aceh are motivated to do their best in making the Rohingya feel welcome and get the psychosocial aid needed through activities. Leyla says:

'All of us hope and wish the best for them, and I just wish the Rohingya people will have a better life in the end, whatever they do. I know that when they are still here with us, we just have to do our best.'

Acehnese and Rohingya share the same religion, and most Rohingya find great comfort in residing in a place with people they have a common platform with, in religion. As they have learned their whole life that religion is something that defines you, and separated humans to the point where they cannot live together if they do not share the same one. The Acehnese society feel responsibility to help, because they are all brothers of the same religion. Although religion can be something that separates people and groups, it can potentially be a unifying factor for people of completely different backgrounds, simply because they share the same faith and philosophies. Although the Indonesian government did not initially allow for reception of refugees, once they did arrive in Aceh, there is one Acehnese value that evidently has coloured their response technique. In Aceh, they have the saying ‘peumulia jaimee’, meaning ‘honour your guest’. The local societies in the areas where refugees have been sheltered have embraced this concept now more than ever, we are told by Abdi from ACT, an NGO working in one of the shelters. The region of Aceh have experiences disasters of different natures themselves, and know what it feels like to need aid from other people and NGOs to get through disastrous times. Wakar, who feels more emotionally linked to Myanmar than many other respondents, appreciate the religious syncretism and the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ in Indonesia. He says that: *‘Like this in Indonesia, I want this for Myanmar. Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, all can live together’*. Above all, the Rohingya refugees whose thoughts are expressed in this thesis wish to find a place where they can feel like home, where they can build a new identity, and then preferably a place where they have relatives so it may be a bit easier to relate to this place and rebuild your identity. Rashid have given much thought to where he wants to live. He has many relatives living in Saudi Arabia, who fled decades ago, and that he therefore has never met. This is the main reason why he wants to resettle there:

‘Well, if I can choose, I would like to go to Saudi Arabia. I have family there [...] UNHCR also asked me ‘do you have family living overseas?’ and I said I have family in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and if I can choose, I would like to go to Saudi Arabia.’

The uncertainty of their future is the heaviest weight many Rohingya feel at this point, which trigger a crisis in identity, but also strengthen the identity created in the community instead of being too connected to a specific place and time. This underlines the points Malkki (1992) make on challenging the idea that identity and roots are merely territorialised, but may just as well be a social construct. Ahida is a very clever fourteen-year old, and hopes to be resettled to a country where she can get education, as she has never attended any real school. They do get education

in the shelters, and she is the most eager student. Ahida's faith is strong, and she believes she will end up in the exact place she is supposed to:

'I don't know, and UNHCR also don't know what is going to happen to us. Where we will go. I am sad, but I am not afraid. I trust God whatever he will give. I am only patient. Our fate is already written by God, so I don't know and I just accept what happens.'

Almost all respondents have family living overseas, as their people have been persecuted for decades, and there have been several flows of refugees from Myanmar since the persecution started. While some have strong preferences on where to go, many put all their faith in religion and that everything will work out the way it should and in the best way the higher power they believe in decides for them. For instance, Wakar does not speak much to his family about moving where they live. He tells that: *'I have family all over the world, in Saudi Arabia, America, Australia, Malaysia... Switzerland! But I do not talk to them. I just want to keep faith in God, where he wants to place me'*. Many respondents feel the same way as Ahida and Wakar in the sense that they to put their faith in God to make sure everything will be fine, often holding back on sharing their wishes. However, some do not want to express what they want, and seems afraid to hope for too much, because they have already experienced so much horror and hatred in their past. We asked Daw what his dream was, and what he wanted for his life, but he just smiled and looked to the ground. We further asked him that if he could go somewhere, anywhere, to find work, whether he would go, to which he answered: *'I don't know. Right now I am here talking to you, sleeping in my room, eating my food. Maybe God will take my life here. Who knows.'* He further expressed that what he meant by this is that he takes one day at a time, and waits in patience to see what will happen, and what God's plan is for him. The insecure future stateless people normally face can often make them feel invaluable and underappreciated, especially when they experience alienation both from their own country and others, before arriving in Aceh. The deepest and highest wish of most Rohingya represented in this thesis, including Ahida, is to have a place they can call their own:

'I don't know if I will get a card, but I heard that I can only stay here for one year, and maybe after that go to another country, but I don't know. Where will Ahida go? I don't know. I want to live somewhere where I feel safe and not have to be afraid that someone will get me and hurt me. I don't know where, as long as it is a place I can be. In here, it's nice that I can sleep well and eat well, but I am not allowed to go out. I don't know why. I just want to know what it feels like when I say, "This is my country".'

Continuing the Newly Restarted Life

Although the Rohingya experience a life in the shelters that is safe and free of heavy neglect and exploitation, there are still restrictions. The situation is only temporary, but as long as they stay patient, they have a good support system around them, especially those who have given birth while in the shelters. The Rohingya have been able to start a new life for themselves, in the sense that they finally have the freedom to marry, have children, and practice religion. However, they are not able to continue this newly started life, as they still have movement restrictions and are not allowed to work and make money. They cannot send their children to school, and they cannot support their family still residing in Rakhine or in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Although the Rohingya escaped their lives in Myanmar, as powerless and exploited individuals, their vulnerability proceeded as they cross international borders. When refugees decide to flee, it is normally by involving themselves with traffickers. This in itself is a great risk, as not all traffickers have good intentions. It is widely known that traffickers abuse their power and exploit the vulnerable. Some Rohingya got in fights with agents over money, and all Rohingya who ended up in Aceh were stranded at sea by their agents, and left to drift. If it had not been for the Acehnese fishermen defying the refugee policies of Indonesia, the refugees would have gone down with the sinking ship. The initial positioning of Indonesia in the regional and worldwide refugee- and asylum policies is similar to that of many nations. It is in many cases of Asia because nations do not have the means to protect refugees as they still have high poverty rates and problematics within the country. In most cases, it is policies loaded with a sense of threat. Although nations may wish to take responsibility, many are fearful of how a large influx of refugees might affect their society, whether or not it is well functioning. This underlines the points made by Stephan et al. (1998). Feelings of threat have been, and are still ruling the refugee policies and positioning of many nations in regards to asylum policies in how the international society meet issues of statelessness.

The Rohingya have roots in Rakhine, maybe even roots on the boat they spent months aboard, and have begun to take root in the temporary shelters in Aceh. This can be seen in accordance to what Malkki (1992) explain about roots and attachments refugees and nationless form though living in, remembering and imagining realities. Some people left Aceh within months of arriving, as they did not wish to wait in a temporary place and a pause state. Others are sad about resettlement, simultaneously as they are grateful for the opportunity to finally get to a

third country where they can continue their lives and embrace freedoms they have been restricted from having before. This may be because of their roots developed in Aceh, and the safety they feel there. They wish to continue from the temporary place, but more than anything they wish to be in their own place, only a different and maybe utopian version of it. Perhaps more than an identity rooted in Aceh, the Rohingya have developed a new identity as a community. They are creating lives located in the present, constructing an alternative reality and a home away from home, rooted in each other as a group with similar backgrounds. Identity is fluid and in constant change, formed by several experiences and understandings, and one can hold multiple identities. This means that identity does not have to be merely territorialised, as can be understood in line with the arguments of Malkki (1992).

Respondents show that they have started to dare to create new and more realistic hopes and dreams, concerning education, work, creating families and living without fear of being attacked and exploited. Many wish to persist in Aceh. The shared religion of Acehnese and Rohingya, and the religious identity of the Rohingya evoke wished to take root and build a life there. Several respondents keep faith in God when reflecting on resettlement, which helps calm the restlessness provoked by uncertainty. The Rohingya are powerless in their situation as stateless refugees, although it is a different type of powerlessness than they felt in Rakhine. The powerlessness seen in their present situation is the lack of knowledge and insight in what comes next. The powerlessness has formed the way many Rohingya do not wish to express their wishes for their future, as they have so far in their lives not felt the benefit of assistance from other people than those of their own group.

7. Concluding Remarks

As a stateless person, and especially being stateless and refugee, everything about your life is uncertain. As shown in this thesis, and particularly in the analysis presented in chapter 5 and 6, the Rohingya's status as stateless has made the group extremely vulnerable. This vulnerability is found in different forms in their stories from the past in Myanmar, and as stateless refugees crossing international borders into the unknown. Back in Myanmar, the Rohingya have been severely exploited, and power abuse is evident in all sectors of society. Generalising and discriminating policies have been created under the military junta that have ruled Myanmar for decades. These policies have further continued into the current official democracy of Myanmar, where the military still have much power over the police, security and immigration sector. The

policies, based on threat, have spread the perceptions of the Rohingya as a threat to the security and national identity of Myanmar. Further, this has bred fear and tensions based on religious differences and perceived value-differences. This can be seen in accordance to Stephan et al. (1998) and the Integrated Threat Theory, and the presented attitudes creating the sense of threat within a society. These policies have opened a platform where there is a common acceptance for exploitation of the weak chain in a corrupt society, and the vulnerable and powerless minority. As soon as stateless people become refugees, they reach a different level of vulnerability and meet other kinds of uncertainties. As a stateless and paperless person, you do not exist within any legal system you are extremely prone to exploitation. Especially in the cases of refugees especially by traffickers and agents. Although the Rohingya did not end up where they initially planned, they are some of the luckier ones when seen in the bigger picture of trafficking destinies contradicting the promises from agents.

Although the Rohingya have been pushed further out of their natural society, the place where they consider themselves natives, it has not been without resistance. The Rohingya wish to keep a sense of belonging in Rakhine, where their ancestors have had their roots. This is visible both in how many are hesitant of leaving, and that many choose to stay. The sense of identity and belonging shows changes when arriving in a new locale. The sense of national identity and territorialised roots, as Malkki (1992) speak of, may be reasons why some choose to stay behind. They wish to stay and fight for their country, and even die there if it comes to that. They refuse to leave, although they are pushed so far out of society that they are alienated and have reached a level of extreme vulnerability. It is evident also in the emphasis the respondents put on the importance of identifying and categorising themselves as Rohingya. Although this name has been actively attempted removed, this is one thing they have refused to let go of.

In the Rohingya's meeting with a new society and culture, they have been able to reflect on their past through a safer present. They are remembering a violent past and a life of oppression from where they are now, in absence of these. Identity is enhanced and a sense of belonging is built on the ground where the Rohingya get to tell their stories, and in these stories build a new sense of Identity together. The analysis offers a clarity in the importance of religion for the Rohingya, especially in how they identify themselves. Along with this, their common background experience enable the ethnic group to form a common identity in a home away from home. A home that does not necessarily have to be territorialised, but rather in the community of fellows with shared experiences before displacement, through fleeing, and in their shared present situation. The freedoms the Rohingya have been robbed of in their past

society is particularly evident when witnessing their embrace of these freedoms once they have them. The Rohingya have had specific measures implemented targeting their group, such as difficulties in getting married and two-child rule. These are specific measures that, as discussed in chapter five, indicate genocidal acts targeting a specific ethnic group within a society. Specific acts of embraced freedom is seen in marriage statistics and child births in the temporary shelters, as well as embracing their religious practice and identity. In addition to identity in religion, many try to make sense of their hopeless situation through religion, and several respondents have expressed their ability to stay patient is imbedded in their faith. Being in an extremely vulnerable situation where you have been exploited by the system that is supposed to protect you, may be a reason why religion is particularly important for the Rohingya. It is the one thing that has been constant when everything else is unstable and unpredictable.

The Rohingya represented in this thesis reflect on their past, current and future from a safer place, and through building an identity together, they have also taken root in the temporary shelters in Aceh, knowing that it is only temporary. This was especially evident when reactions to the resettlement announcements they have been hopefully waiting for made them sad and scared, because this was now a safe place and a home away from home. Refugees take root to different extent in every place they are and have been. The Rohingya will always have roots in Rakhine, some more than others, and many especially because they did not only leave their life there but also their family and memories. This underlines the point discussed in Malkki (1992), of Diasporas creating collective memory about another place and time, which again creates new drawings of desire and attachment. Refugees and stateless people create lives located in the present, and construct an alternative in their current situation, instead of living fully rooted in the past. Focusing on identity within a singular case may make generalising problematic, as its complexity makes in unique, although similarities can be found in other cases of statelessness. This especially includes creating identity and roots away from a homeland, and the vulnerability of stateless refugees.

Although the Rohingya are in a safe and somewhat comfortable present, they feel a powerlessness of not knowing what comes next. They reflect on their future as well from a safe present, and the uncertainty of knowing that there will be change but not what or when or with whom creates restlessness. Many worry about their past, their family living in the society they fled from, and about the future of their families, their people and themselves. In a sense, their lives are in pause mode while they are in the shelters, as they all know it is temporary. Many respondents have shown that they do not wish to express their wishes for the future, as they are

scared it will not go the way they wish. However, as the faith stands strong for the Rohingya society, most believe that a higher power will make sure the Rohingya will finally get a worthy life. Some dare to dream of getting an education and starting a life, and as Ahida state, which many respondents have agreed on, they: *'want to know what it feels when I say "this is my country".'* As Malkki (1992) writes, linking belonging and nativeness only to territory and birthplace is to overlook the multiplicity of attachment formed by people in through living in, remembering and imagining the place and time of the places they have taken- or wish to take root.

All theories used to support this study focus on complexity in different way. Understnadings of complexity are important when attempting to comprehend topics of this nature. Although I have carried out a case study, the topic has relevance for understanding similar contexts and has some transferability to a wider context than only that of this particular case. Using the theory of Richmond (1993) as an inspiration and backdrop of my data collection have influenced in terms of embracing complexity, and the importance of analysing in the light of the history of the Rohingya. Seeing where they come from, and what the underlying factors of their exodus is of great importance to understand their current situation. Additionally, referring back to Peshkin (2008) in chapter four, transferability and some generalisations have been made as I have a combining purpose of the study between focusing on a specific case and wanting to say something about a bigger context.

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3 Appendix 1: Aliases and Introduction of Respondents

All respondents are represented in the paper, but to different extents. Those few respondents who are not used, for different reasons varying from informed consent to validity, are not on this list.

Aarif	A former fisherman, who lost his family and village while working on a fishing boat. He then fled to a different village, before this village too was attacked and everyone left Rakhine in fisher vessels.
Abdul	Has lived in refugee camp in Bangladesh since he was three years old, being told to patiently wait for resettlement. He is now in his mid 20's, and fled alone, to find work and bring his wife and children through family reunion.
Ahida	Key respondent. Very smart 14 years old. Both parents are dead. Her mother died giving birth to her, and her father was shot. She fled with her sister and nephew, to reunite with her sister's husband in Malaysia. In the women's shelter.
Bisma	She fled with her little sister and her baby son, to reunite with her husband in Malaysia.
Chandni	A young, very shy and quiet woman at the age of 14.
Daw	A boy, age 16, who fled Myanmar alone. He made close friends in the shelter, but they fled.
Eliza	A young girl who lost her parents, and is all alone in the camp, but has created family of the people there.
Leyla	An volunteer in the NGO ACT, who works closely with the Refugees in one of the mixed sex shelters.
Ramsha	A young girl who fled without family.
Rashid	Key respondents. In his twenties, has been in jail several times for owning prohibited items, and for attending Qur'an school.
Saleena	A young woman who got married in the shelter, and is now pregnant with her first child.
Wakar	Key respondent. Age 35, and has a wide selection of stories and experiences. He has fled several Myanmar times and tried to sneak back several times. This time, he fled from Bangladesh, where he had been living for the past years.
Zohora	A woman at age 29, from Mondu Haribare. Three Children. She got married in Burma, and her husband lives in Malaysia.

4 Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Rohingya

Where and when were you born?

How was life in Myanmar before you decided you leave the country?

Did life for the Rohingya people change at specific points?

- If difficulties in understanding the question: For example with the conflict between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists in 2012?

How were your living standards in Myanmar?

Did you live in a camp or shelter in Myanmar or Bangladesh before coming here?

How did you get to where you are now? Your history and your travel to Indonesia? How long was the journey? When did you leave home? Was it only Rohingya people in the boats?

Why did you leave Myanmar? What exactly triggered your decision to leave?

What was the biggest risk? What was the hardest thing to leave behind?

Did you go with your whole family? How did you get here?

- If family is not with you, where are they? Do you keep in touch // how?
- Any family remaining in Myanmar? Why did they stay? How is life there for them? Are they allowed to stay although they do not have citizenship?
- When did Myanmar change? How was it before? Has it always been difficult for your people?
- Who arranged for your boat? What did you have to pay and how was the travel over the sea?

Looking back on your whole journey, leaving you country and starting the journey over the sea – what was the hardest part?

What are your plans or dreams?

- What do you think will happen after the one year residence permit is over?
- Where do you wish to stay?

How does it feel to be considered an immigrant in your own country?

How is life in the camps? Do you have all your needs covered (food, protection/security, education, sanitary, clean water)?

How is the relationship with the local people of this area?

Why did people flee from the shelter?

Do you have refugee status from UNHCR?

- What does it mean to have refugee status?

What do you want from NGO's, and from organisations like ASEAN?

- From the Indonesian government?
- From the government of Myanmar?

What do you think is the best way to solve your situation?

NGO workers

What is required to become a registered refugee under UNHCR?

- Who get's the registration card, who does not, and why?

How is the situation in the camps?

What are the effects of the presence of refugees for Aceh as a region?

Why do you think nations choose to stay passive in a crisis like this?

- People who have the wealth to take in refugees under the system, but don not – is it that simple?
- What do you think may be a solution to this problem, if any?

How much of the responsibility do you think it is fair to put on ASEAN member-countries and neighbouring countries of Myanmar?

- Versus the responsibility of Myanmar in itself.
- Do you see any solution for Myanmar?
- Do you think the Rohingya will ever be able to return?