ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN INDONESIA:
THE DYNAMICS OF STATELESSNESS AND THE VIEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

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Abstract
Rohingya refugees who are experiencing a crisis due to the genocide in Myanmar have attracted international attention. The existence of the Rohingya as an ethno-religious minority group was officially discriminated against which led to forced expulsion by the Myanmar government in 1982 with the issuance of the citizenship law which stated that Rohingya citizenship was denied or not recognized as one of the official ethnicities in Myanmar. So, the Rohingya were forced to flee their country to other countries, including Indonesia. This paper aims to determine the dynamics of Rohingya Muslims while in Indonesia. Using qualitative research methods by conducting observations, interviews and data analysis. The results of this study indicate that the Rohingya ethnicity in Indonesia as stateless (without citizenship) undergoes a process of acculturation, marriage with local Indonesian citizens (WNI), and developing survival strategies because some have lived in Indonesia for more than eight years. In conclusion, the Rohingya ethnicity while in Indonesia experienced conditions of uncertainty in their lives because they did not have citizenship status and hoped to be sent to a third country by UNHCR. Indonesian people accept Rohingya Muslims to stay in Indonesia temporarily because there is a common Islamic identity and in the name of humanity.

Keywords: Existence, Muslim Minorities, Rohingya, Indonesia.

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The occurrence of ethnic conflicts in one of the ASEAN countries in 2012 marked the dynamics of international politics and became a concern of the United Nations. The ethnic conflict occurred in Myanmar, specifically between the Rohingya and Rakhine ethnicities, with the Rohingya being predominantly Muslim and the Rakhine being predominantly Buddhist. The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group who live in Rakhine State on Myanmar's west coast. The conflict in the Rohingya ethnic group resulted in at least 43 percent of its people becoming refugees. Meanwhile, more than 87 percent of the population lacks access to basic necessities for their livelihoods, such as clothing, food, and shelter, as well as access to health care and education for their children. This protracted conflict has turned into a humanitarian tragedy, threatening global peace and security, with global ramifications, particularly in the ASEAN region (Rahman, 2015).

The existence of the Rohingya Muslim community can be described as a nation without a state. They have an identity, but they lack the power and government structure to gain access to services. On the contrary, they are subjected to pressure and discrimination by the Myanmar government. They no longer have the opportunity to exercise their most fundamental right, even the right to life, because they are the targets of government assassination (Gill, 2015).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has investigated a large amount of information related to the conflict that occurred in the Rohingya ethnicity and distributed the Rohingya ethnic situation to the international community through various media so that the world community is aware of the problems that occur in the Rohingya ethnicity, even though the Myanmar government appears to be silent (Ula, 2015).

The Myanmar government's treatment of the Rohingya as a minority has been proven to be illegal under international law. With legal status based on immigration and citizenship laws, as well as efforts to restrict access to welfare including health, education, and work, the Rohingya have been poor, expelled, deprived of their property, and subjected to torture that is not legal (Thontowi, 2013). With what happened to the Rohingya, the Myanmar government has committed genocide, as evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of victims of violence since 2012, as well as the Myanmar government's policy of burmanization, which is the disappearance of non-Buddhist ethnic groups from Myanmar, which has an impact on the Rohingya ethnicity, which adheres to Islam (Siba & Anggi, 2018). As a result, many Rohingya choose to flee Myanmar in order to save themselves and their families.

A swarm of Rohingya refugees fled Myanmar in May 2015. Initially, three countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, refused entry to waves of refugees from Andaman and Malacca Strait ships. However, the fishermen were forced to bring the refugees to Indonesia, including Aceh, because their condition was critical due to hunger and dehydration when they were discovered. The ship they were on had been damaged to the point where the ship's engine no longer functioned. The refugees from Bangladesh and the Rohingya ethnic group ran out of options and were tossed around in the middle of the sea (Trianita, 2015). In the end, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand agreed to provide temporary shelter to Rohingya Muslim refugees.

Thailand's government provides access to refugee camps, including nine in Thailand, and is willing to do resettlement. Other steps taken by the Thai government to assist asylum seekers and Rohingya refugees include basic needs (health, economy, and food), educational aspects, social aspects, and individual security aspects (Augita 2017). Meanwhile, the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemenlu RI) reported that 1,346 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh entered Indonesian waters in May 2015. The Rohingya refugees were housed in two locations in Aceh. The initial arrival of 558 refugees was followed by three subsequent arrivals of 664, 47, and 96 people, respectively. Through President Jokowi's foreign policy, the Indonesian government provided assistance to Rohingya refugees from 2016 to 2018. The assistance was delivered on the
Myanmar-Bangladesh border in the form of food, ten containers of medicine, and the construction of schools in Rakhine State (Saragih, 2017).

When Rohingya refugees arrive in Indonesia, the provinces of Aceh and Makassar are the first to receive them. Until 2019, some Myanmar refugees in Medan and Makassar had been living in refugee camps for 8 years, and some had sought political asylum in the United States, Australia, and Europe, but many had to wait and had not received confirmation of their departure from the United States. Third-country assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Rohingya Muslims must interact with other immigrants from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Syria, and other countries while at the shelter. Furthermore, due to language and cultural barriers in their home country, they interact with Indonesians both verbally and nonverbally. Their new social life in Indonesia is accompanied by time spent interacting with the local community. They also devise adaptation strategies in order to survive as stateless citizens, such as plans for their future and the education of their children. This paper investigates the existence of the Rohingya as refugees who have lived in Indonesia for 8-10 years. One of the recent discussions that has gone unnoticed is the dynamics of their lives as refugees. This paper focuses on all forms of interaction and communication processes between Rohingya refugees and local residents, as well as the planning of various parties involved with Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. As a result, a new policy for Rohingya refugees can be implemented, as well as various perspectives on their presence in Indonesia.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research method in this study is qualitative, the data collection process is carried out through interviews and observations as primary data for Rohingya refugees, religious leaders and community leaders in the cities of Medan and Makassar. Secondary data obtained by researchers through literature study, where researchers take references from books, journals, internet, and related libraries and conduct in-depth observations.

This qualitative research involves the use and collection of various materials such as case studies, personal experiences, biographies, documentation, interviews, observations, historical texts, interactionism and rituals that describe routine and problematic moments and their meaning in individual and collective life. (Salim, 2002).

**DISCUSSION**

**Acculturation and Survival Strategies**

Indonesia is one of the countries that accept Rohingya refugees. There were at least three waves of Rohingya refugees arriving in Indonesia, namely in 2009, 2012 and 2015. Around 400 Rohingya in 2009 landed in the East Aceh region. The next wave of Rohingya refugees occurred in 2012 which began with sectarian violence targeting the Rakhine region on Rohingya people (UNHCR, 2016).

In May 2015, Indonesia welcomed Rohingya refugees who had become stranded in Aceh waters. As many as 1,300 people, mixed with Rohingya and Bangladeshi refugees, were rescued by Acehnese fishermen before arriving in Aceh waters, the boats left by their crews in Andaman waters, Thailand (UNHCR, 2015). (Amnesty, 2015). Initially, these Myanmar nationals were turned down (Kompas 2015). The Indonesian government finally allowed the Rohingya refugees to land, after which they were given assistance and temporary shelter (BBC, 2016). The Indonesian government’s stance on accepting Rohingya refugees stems from their shared identity as a country that upholds human rights standards, and Rohingya refugees are victims of human rights violations in their home country, Myanmar (Moy & Ardlı, 2016).

The province of Aceh and the city of Medan were the first to receive Rohingya refugees, who were then relocated to various regions in Indonesia, including Makassar and Jabodetabek. According to the findings of a study conducted by SUAKA (2016), there were 959...
Rohingya refugees in Indonesia as of September 2016. This figure is significantly lower than the total number of Rohingya refugees in May 2015, which was 1791.

In the Aceh region, Rohingya refugees are housed in refugee camps. Meanwhile, the Rohingya refugees in Makassar and Medan were placed in community houses or immigration detention shelters and houses. The author focuses on the two cities studied as representations, Medan and Makassar. The two cities house Indonesia's largest Rohingya refugee population and represent the country's western and eastern regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Medan</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Makassar</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Research results, 2019

There are 276 Rohingya refugees in Medan, 164 of whom are male and 112 of whom are female. They are distributed across 20 community houses in Medan and Deli Serdang. The Rohingya refugees who settled in Medan were mostly from Aceh, where they had been rescued by local fishermen. Due to a lack of suitable evacuation sites, the government, in collaboration with UNHCR, relocated to a refugee camp in Medan. Meanwhile, there are 181 Rohingya refugees in Makassar City. There are 126 males and 55 females living in 18 community houses. In addition, there are approximately 6 Rohingya refugees who are self-sufficient. Refugees in Makassar typically come from refugee camps in Jakarta, Bali, and Kupang.

After more than nine years in Indonesia, Rohingya refugees in general have experienced acculturation, which is defined as a change in a culture caused by contact with cultural groups that emphasizes minority groups' acceptance of new cultural patterns and characteristics of indigenous people (Mulyana & Jalaludin, 2001). Cultural shifts from one group to another result in cultural mixing and blending. As a result, acculturation can be defined as the phenomenon of several group cultures combining to form a new culture while still paying attention to the original culture.

The length of time Rohingya Muslims have lived in Indonesia has a significant impact on the presence of cultural acculturation. Acculturation occurs more naturally in the Rohingya ethnic group, which lives within a local socio-cultural system, namely Indonesia. The types of lifestyle in question include how people dress, what they eat, and how they live their lives. Aside from this way of life, the most significant acculturation experienced by the Rohingya in Indonesia is language acculturation.

Abdul Foyas, a Rohingya refugee who has lived in Makassar for 9 years, said that he follows the culture of Indonesians, who always wear pants, in his daily life. The Rohingya have made it a habit to wear sarongs in their daily lives in their homeland. Similarly, food. If food in Myanmar is limited to rice or wheat, food in Indonesia is more diverse.

Furthermore, the regularity of their lives prior to arriving in Indonesia is vastly different. According to Foyas, they are far from a culture of clean and healthy living. It is common for him to not flush the toilet when throwing dirt or littering. As a result, at the start of the arrival of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. Locals also stigmatize Rohingya refugees who do not maintain clean living conditions despite living in community houses. Currently, the issue and stigma surrounding the cleanliness of Rohingya refugees have been greatly reduced.

In terms of language acculturation, the majority of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia have previously settled in or visited Malaysia. The majority of the Rohingya refugees interviewed by the author can communicate in Malay or Indonesian, though their speech is staggered and their sentence structure is erratic. The majority of them live and work in Malaysia, so they are familiar with the Malay language. Abdul Foyas is one of the refugees who worked as a construction worker in Malaysia for four years before arriving in Makassar. When he arrived in
Makassar, he was not immediately placed in a guesthouse, but was instead detained at the Immigration Detention Center (Rudenim) for one year and one month. He currently resides at the Bai Rupa guesthouse, Jalan Andi Mappaodang No 17 Makassar, with his wife and four children. As a result, it is relatively simple for Rohingya refugees who have relocated to Indonesia to learn Indonesian vocabulary.

Their prior experience with the language allows Rohingya refugees to socialize and communicate with local communities more easily. Even if some refugees did not speak Malay or Indonesian at first, they learned and practiced the language by interacting with local residents while shopping at the market. Since their arrival at the community house, the intensity of interaction between Rohingya refugees and local residents has also increased. The Rohingya community in Medan generally interacts with the community surrounding the refugee camps. This also gives refugees the opportunity to better understand and learn Indonesian. The Rohingya refugees initially refused to mingle or work together, preferring to leave only when invited by Indonesians. Currently, these refugees are accustomed to interacting with locals and frequently engage in activities such as futsal or simply hanging out together. In general, single male Rohingya refugees, particularly local youth, are more open to mingling with the community.

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**Mixed marriage with Indonesian citizen**

The acculturation of Rohingya refugees, combined with the length of time they have lived in Indonesia, has led to some refugees marrying Indonesian citizens. As Abu Ahmad, a Rohingya refugee in Medan who married a Medan resident and settled in the Deli Tua neighborhood of Deli Serdang, discovered. They are married serially and are not legally married because neither of them has a citizenship identity. Abu Ahmad has been in Indonesia since 2010. He has to travel back and forth from his father-in-law’s to the community house on Jalan Bunga Cempaka in Medan on a daily basis.

Abu Ahmad explained that during the early stages of his marriage, he got to know his wife, a midwife, and then told UNHCR that he wanted to marry her. In principle, UNHCR cannot forbid refugees from marrying, especially if they marry local residents. As a result, he was unable to accompany his wife to the community house where he lived with the other refugees. This is because his wife, who is not a refugee, is not entitled to basic refugee rights but is still permitted to visit the community house.

Muhammad Khan, who married an Indonesian citizen, had a similar experience. In
In 2011, he had a meeting with his wife in Malaysia. His wife, Marwani, was working as an Indonesian worker (TKI) from Aceh at the time. His own wife in Aceh no longer has parents or property, so she is completely reliant on her husband. In 2012, Muhammad Kahn traveled to Indonesia.

According to Kahn, there were 17 Rohingya couples who married in Medan. Three of them married while still in Malaysia. Not everything went well during the marriage process between Rohingya residents and local residents in Medan because they realized they had nothing and no clear job. However, serial marriages occurred, and the UNHCR, IOM, and the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights Regional Office all considered it their right to marry. In Makassar City, the process of their interaction has resulted in a sense of love among local residents, who eventually married. According to the author's research, there are at least 20 Rohingya refugees who are married to locals and have children. According to the rules, Rohingya children who are Indonesian citizens are not permitted to stay in community houses and are not eligible for IOM pocket money.

Rofiah, a Rohingya refugee in Makassar, stated that many Rohingya are marrying in Makassar because they frequently meet. There are Rohingya, for example, who usually buy their daily necessities and then get to know the people of Makassar. As a result, love blossoms and the couple decides to marry. In general, Rohingya refugees who are married to Indonesian citizens will find it difficult to enter a third country because most third countries prefer unmarried families. with nationals of the countries in which they are temporarily housed.

The marriage of the Rohingya community with Makassar residents is part of their human rights, according to UNHCR Makassar’s Yance Tamela, because love and marriage cannot be prohibited. However, UNHCR has issued an appeal to refugees, requesting that those who wish to marry local residents report to UNHCR in order to be recorded and receive marriage-related education.

**Views of religious and community leaders towards Rohingya refugees**

The presence of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia, particularly in the cities of Medan and Makassar, provides justification for their acceptance as a minority community in the midst of a diverse Indonesian society. The length of time they have lived in Indonesia has made local residents familiar with them, but it has not resulted in a long-term solution to their situation after temporarily evacuating in Indonesia.

Regarding the presence of Rohingya for the Makassar people, the sociologist, who is also the Chancellor of UIN Alauddin Makassar, stated that in general, the militancy of the Makassar people’s anger cannot be questioned because the Makassar people have a history of this. As a result, when there are community groups with problems, such as Rohingya refugees, the people of Makassar are concerned because of ideological similarities. As a result, the people of Makassar make space and provide a place for Rohingya refugees to settle.

Furthermore, Yonris, the administrator of the Indonesian Buddhist Association (Permabudhi) Makassar, stated that the Rohingya's status as immigration detainees made them unable to freely interact with local residents because there was a time limit and they could not work outside. The Immigration Detention Center rules, which are in charge of supervising refugees, stipulate a maximum return time of 22.00 at night. Those who have
lived in Indonesia for a long time, on the other hand, tend to be more flexible in interacting with local residents so that they are not bored with constantly being in shelter locations.

Pastor Eric Barus, Secretary of the North Sumatran Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) Medan, stated that the FKUB was aware of the Rohingya problem in Medan City. Responding to the Rohingya must be viewed from the right perspective, according to Christians. It can't be instant unless it's planned. It is critical to be helped from a humanitarian standpoint. Cupanitia M. Marlos, a Hindu figure from North Sumatra's Parisada Hindu Darma Indonesia (PHDI), also stated that refugees in Medan require humanitarian assistance. Not only should assistance be provided to Rohingya refugees, but also to those from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Furthermore, religious books and worship tools are important needs for refugees. The Rohingya crisis is about humanity, not religion.

Rohingya Problems in Indonesia

The presence of Rohingya refugees creates its own set of issues, particularly for the party being boarded, in this case Indonesia. According to field findings, there are several issues related to the existence of Rohingya refugees. For starters, the status of Rohingya refugees is still unclear, and they hope to be sent to a third country. However, there are those who, out of desperation, decide to marry locals and have children. Rohingya refugees who marry locals will eventually face demographic administrative challenges, such as the status of children, population identity, and other citizenship-related rights.

Second, assistance from various parties is becoming increasingly limited. It is difficult for refugees to meet their basic needs as a result of this. So far, refugees who have registered with UNHCR will receive financial assistance from the International Organization of Migrants (IOM), which is in charge of meeting their basic needs. Yance Tamela, UNHCR Makassar, stated that refugees, including Rohingya, receive an allowance of IDR 1,250,000 per person per month, with a maximum of two people per family, and children receive IDR 500,000 per person. This pocket money is distributed on the tenth of each month. Muhammad Kahn has a wife and five children. They must adjust their daily needs based on the pocket money they receive, because their wife and children do not receive pocket money from IOM because they are considered married to Indonesian citizens in order for their children to become Indonesian citizens. They do not receive funds for spending because they are not considered refugees, according to UNHCR and IOM rules. However, the IOM and UNHCR granted his wife and child permission and exceptions to stay in the community house on Jalan Bunga Cempaka in Medan.

He was not allowed to look for work outside of the refugee camp for 8 years, so he and his family opened a small shop in the room of the refugee camp to meet their needs. Some refugees worked secretly as construction workers in Makassar, but it was only for a short time. They were concerned that if the guards caught them working outside, the Rudenim and UNHCR would be notified. Though they will need to put in extra effort to meet the needs of their respective families.

Furthermore, IOM no longer covers basic needs for refugees who arrived in Indonesia after March 2018. As a result, they must be able to survive with the assistance of others. This occurred in both Medan and Makassar. The government has not yet allocated funds for Rohingya refugees, and it is unclear whether these funds will be used to finance independent refugees or to facilitate skill-building activities before being sent to a third country or given training to form independent businesses.

The public's perception of Rohingya refugees is the third point to consider. As local residents, Indonesians accept Rohingya refugees on the basis of their humanity and their religious status as Muslims due to their shared religious identity. The Indonesian people, on the other hand, prefer the option of immediately sending the Rohingya refugees to a third country for a better life rather than becoming a social burden.

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in the future. Such a "dual" assumption discourages refugees in Indonesia. This idea also gives the refugees a lot of hope that they will be sent to third countries. Muhammad Kahn, for example, is still hoping and waiting to travel to a third country with his family. However, about a year ago, he and his family met with the Canadian ambassador's representative. Meanwhile, it is currently difficult for other Rohingya refugees to be sent to third countries, particularly those who already have Indonesian family members.

Fourth, the government's assistance is regarded as inadequate. The Rohingya refugees in Indonesia sincerely hope that the government will grant them the same rights as Indonesian citizens. However, the Indonesian government does not yet have regulations in place to make Indonesians stateless. Furthermore, as previously stated, Rohingya refugees expect government assistance to be immediately dispatched to third countries because they believe their lives are still in limbo. With their departure, these refugees' chances for a better life have improved.

CONCLUSION

The forced expulsion by the Myanmar government has forced the Rohingyas to live as refugees, with no clear and definite way out until now. In Indonesia, Rohingya refugees are currently dispersed across several major cities, including Medan and Makassar. Since their arrival in Indonesia, Rohingya refugees' lives have largely proceeded normally, with no threats from any party. However, because of the length of time they spent in refugee camps, some of these transformations in Rohingya refugees occurred, such as acculturation and marriage with Indonesian citizens.

The acculturation of Rohingya refugees consists of a lifestyle, specifically the way they dress, food issues, and the regularity of life that adapts to the conditions in which they currently live. Furthermore, language acculturation has become an important aspect for refugees to interact with local residents, which is mostly done when purchasing necessities of life at the market and associating with local residents. Because of the length of their stay in refugee camps and the opportunity to interact with local residents, some of these refugees married Indonesian citizens and had children.

As refugees, the Rohingyas in Indonesia face a number of challenges, including, first and foremost, population administrative constraints, as they are still stateless. Furthermore, refugees who marry Indonesian citizens are not officially registered by the state, and population administrative rights are not fully owned. This also raises the issue of the child's status and other citizenship-related rights. Second, assistance from stakeholders such as the IOM is becoming increasingly scarce. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) policy states that refugees arriving after March 2018 are no longer provided with basic necessities, including the Rohingyas. This means they will become self-sufficient refugees. During the refugee period, they relied on UNHCR, which provided pocket money, to meet their daily needs because they were not permitted to work outside of the refugee camps.

Third, local residents' attitudes toward refugees: on the one hand, they accept Rohingya refugees on the basis of humanity and religious status, but on the other, they hope that refugees can be sent to third countries as soon as possible so that they do not become a social burden in the future. Fourth, the government's assistance is deemed inadequate due to a lack of attention to the requests of refugees so that they can be sent to third countries.

Religious and community leaders in Rohingya refugee areas are more likely to accept their presence due to similarities in religious identity and sense of humanity. They also urged the government, through the UNHCR, to immediately relocate Rohingya refugees in Indonesia to a third country and to put an end to Myanmar's ethnic conflict. So that this humanitarian crisis can be resolved and not resurrected.
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