

The Forbidden "R" Word in Myanmar

Compiled for research study by Naing Tinnyuntpu World Opinions in some of the links may contain views that are inaccurate and biased or incomplete facts that presented only one side of the story.

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Background

You can talk about anything in China, conventional wisdom says, except the 3 T's — Tibet, Taiwan and [Tiananmen \(1989\)](#) — Gate of Heavenly Peace with the Forbidden City in the backdrop. In Myanmar, there is a word with "R" in it that should be treated with sensitivity. It's not about the old debate on whether to call this country "Burma" or "Myanmar". In recent years, the "R" word is making headline news around the world for approximately a million stateless people in Rakhine (formerly Arakan) state. Co-incidentally, "R" also spells "Refugees" for countries like the U.S. and Australia that no longer want to absorb a large number of them. It's hard to say which is more — true love and compassion for [the plight of "the least wanted people in the world" described by the Los Angeles based Jewish Journal](#), or fear of a large influx of Muslim refugees.

Australian government now has offshore detention facilities in Pacific island nations of Nauru and Papua New Guinea where hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers are detained, and [accused of Human Rights abuses](#).

That brings back the memories of post 9/11 [Muslim detainees at Guantanamo Bay](#) where American interrogators put in use the infamous [Enhanced Interrogation Techniques](#) approved by then vice-president Dick Cheney. By not bringing them to the American soil, the detainees were not protected by the American legal system including the right for an attorney.


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Arrests Over Violence in Rakhine

Authorities investigate Tuesday's sectarian clashes in western Burma's Rakhine state.

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A Rakhine family at a temporary shelter in Sittwe for

Authorities have arrested 60 people in connection with the latest wave of sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims in western Burma's Rakhine state, local people and an official said Thursday, as more Rohingya Muslims fleeing the country were turned back by Bangladesh.

Some 60 Muslims from Anautpyin village were arrested Thursday over Tuesday's clashes in Yathetaung township and sent to the state capital of Sittwe, local people told RFA.

Hla Myint, Yathetaung's Rakhine Nationalities Development Party chairman, confirmed the arrests

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/rakhine-06212012190247.html>

The riots finally came after weeks of sectarian disputes including a gang rape and murder of a Rakhine woman by Rohingyas and killing of ten Burmese Muslims by Rakhines.^{[79][80]}

From both sides, whole villages were "decimated".^{[80][81]} According to the Burmese authorities, the violence, between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, left 78 people dead, 87 injured, and up to 140,000 people have been displaced.

— [Wikipedia](#) —

[Brussels-based International Crisis Group](#) has an insightful description of the situation in Rakhine. Here are some highlights:

The situation in Rakhine State contains a toxic mixture of historical centre-periphery tensions, serious inter-communal and inter-religious conflict with minority Muslim communities, and extreme poverty and under-development. This led to major violence in 2012 and further sporadic outbreaks since then. It represents a significant threat to the overall success of the transition, and has severely damaged the reputation of the government when it most needs international support and investment. Any policy approach must start from the recognition that there will be no easy fixes or quick solutions.

This crisis has affected the whole of the state and all communities within it. It requires a sustained and multi-pronged response, as well as critical humanitarian and protection interventions in the interim.

The largest group in the state are the Rakhine, who are Buddhist, and there is a significant Muslim minority, including the Rohingya – a designation rejected by the government and Rakhine.

The Rakhine community as a whole has tended to be cast internationally as violent extremists – ignoring the diversity of opinions that exist, the fact that the Rakhine themselves are a long-oppressed minority, and rarely attempting to understand their perspective and concerns. This is counterproductive.

Muslim communities, in particular the Rohingya, have over the years been progressively marginalised from social and political life. Many have long been denied full citizenship, with significant consequences for their livelihoods and well-being.

Ms. Yanghe Lee is a South Korean UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Human Rights issues. She visited Myanmar for the 4th time in June-July 2016. Her most memorable visit was in January 2015.



The UN human rights chief has called on Myanmar to condemn a Buddhist nationalist monk for calling a UN special envoy a "bitch" and a "whore".

“We have explained about the race protection law, but the bitch criticised the laws without studying them properly,”

“Don't assume that you are a respectable person because of your position. For us, you are a whore.”

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30928744>

Washington Post reports on October 19th, 2016:

Suu Kyi [told the U.N. investigator](#) that the government would avoid using the term “Rohingya,” which many Burmese consider incendiary. Many Burmese call the Rohingya “Bengali,” a reference to the fact that some migrated from Bangladesh years earlier.

“This is inflammatory,” Suu Kyi said. “We simply say Muslims of Rakhine state. Because this is just a factual description which nobody should object to. But of course, everybody objects because they want their old emotive terms to be used.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi often uses the word [ထုံတီ](#) **Thut-til** meaning courage to challenge the people to be brave and bold. New York Times editorial board on May 9, 2016 run an article: [Aung San Suu Kyi’s Cowardly Stance on the Rohingya](#). That was a major shift in reporting by the media in the West on [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) since the days following [the 1988 events](#) when articles by just a handful of authors such as [Bertil Lintner](#) and [David Steinberg](#) on Burma first appeared in magazines such as [Far Eastern Economic Review](#) and [Asiaweek](#). All along, they have been solidly behind her.

According to Amnesty International, estimated 140,000 people were displaced in Myanmar in 2012 and almost 86,000 made the hazardous journey into neighboring countries and denied resettlement in Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia or Australia.

“To Burma (and the rest of the world it seems), the Rohingyas are not people. They are stateless. Without the proper required identification documents, they have no chance at being a citizen anywhere.”

— [Amnesty International](#) —

The figures by the Amnesty International could be a little inflated. Some percentage of them turned out to be Bangladeshis fleeing poverty in their homeland in neighboring Bangladesh. Australian Foreign minister Julie Bishop had this to say:

“They (Indonesia) believe there are about 7000 people at sea (and) they think about 30-40 per cent are Rohingya, the rest are Bangladeshi; and they are not, in Indonesia’s words, asylum-seekers, they are not refugees, they are illegal labourers, they’ve been promised or are seeking jobs in Malaysia,”

<http://www.news.com.au/world/pacific/rohingya-refugee-crisis-indonesia-claims-boats-carry-bangladesh-labourers/news-story/f2fa38314cb8d58d547f9a3b454cf8d1>

Who are the Rohingyas?

Until the 2012 Rakhine State Riots, the word "Rohingya" was virtually unheard of in Myanmar. For an average Burman, all Indian looking people are ကုလား (ka1-la3). In addition to Indo-Aryan people of Indian sub-continent, this word also refers to Arabs, Caucasians, and Negroids from the West side of the world as opposed to Mongoloids in the East such as Chinese, Thais, Koreans, and Japanese. Who are the Rohingyas? Political Science Professor Sumit Ganguly at Indiana University, Bloomington wrote on *The Diplomat* :

“The Rohingya are an ethnic group closely linked through language, culture, and religion to the dominant Bengali population of Bangladesh. Indeed, the Rohingya language is very close the variety of Bangla spoken in Chittagong, Bangladesh’s major port in the southeast, and until the late 1600s part of the Arakanese Empire in today’s Myanmar. The Rohingya are concentrated in Rakhine (previously Arakan) State, Myanmar. However, under the 1982 Burmese Citizenship Law, Rohingya were denied the right to claim Burmese citizenship. The government argued that the Rohingya were illegal migrants that only settled in the country during British rule, which justified the denial of their citizenship rights.”

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/refugees-and-neighbors-rohingya-in-bangladesh/>

History of Chittagong

“Chittagong has been a seaport since ancient times. The region was home to the ancient Bengali Buddhist Samatata and Harikela states.[1] It later fell under of the rule of the Gupta Empire, the Pala Empire and the Vesali kingdom of Arakan till the 7th century. Arabs traded with the port from the 9th century AD. An account by historian Lama Taranath has revealed a Buddhist king Gopichandra had his capital at Chittagong in the 10th century, and according to Tibetan tradition, Chittagong was the birthplace of 10th century Buddhist Tantric Tilayogi.[2] In the Fourteenth Century, explorer Ibn Battuta passed through Chittagong during his travels.”

“Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah of Sonargaon conquered Chittagong in 1340 AD.[3] Sultan Giasuddin Mubarak Shah constructed a highway from Chittagong to Chandpur and ordered the construction of many lavish mosques and tombs. After the defeat of Mahmud Shah in the hands of Sher Shah in 1538, the Arakanese Kingdom of Mrauk U regained Chittagong. From this time onward, until its conquest by the Mughals, this region was under the control of the Portuguese and the Magh pirates (a notorious name for Arakanese) for 128 years.[2]”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Chittagong

Note: Vesali kingdom of Arakan is known as ဝေသာလီ Waithali Kingdom in Burmese. Their alphabets are shown in the middle two columns of the table on the cover of this paper.

Rakhine state



Rakhine, formerly known as Arakan is situated on the western coastal stretch of Myanmar. From the Google satellite photo, Rakhine state line separating it from the central plains to the east and lower delta regions to the southeast can be made out by the stretch of Rakhine Yoma range of mountains. To the north of Mrauk-U, those mountains connect with Chin hills in Chin State. To the northwest lies Chittagong Hills in Bangladesh.

At least half of Chittagong Hills region in Bangladesh used to be part of ancient Rakhine kingdoms -- Vesali kingdom of Arakan in the 7th century and Kingdom of Mrauk-U in the 1600s. Between 1430 AD and 1785, Mrauk-U was the last capital of Rakhine Kings. After the [First Anglo-Burmese War](#) in 1826, Sittwe was made the seat of administration by the British. Mrauk-U was called မြို့ဟောင်း (myo1-houn3) Mrohaung meaning "old city" until the original name was restored back in 1979.

Although Rakhine today is among the poorest, and arguably the most neglected states in Myanmar, it has a huge earning potential and employment opportunities from tourist attractions in [Ngapali](#), ancient temples of [Mrauk-U](#), and from [Special Economic Zone in Kyaukphu](#).

Deep sea ports located on [Kyaukpyu](#) and nearby [Maday Island](#) are strategic locations which connect 2,400km (1,500 mile) gas and oil pipelines to Kunming, the capital of the southeast Chinese province of Yunnan. The oil pipeline not only shortens the distance of oil supply from the Middle East, it also bypasses the Straits of Malacca, which is vulnerable to navel blockade by the U.S. 6th Fleet in potential future conflicts. State-owned oil company China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) had invested \$2.5 billion into the project.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ericrmeyer/2015/02/09/oil-and-gas-china-takes-a-shortcut/#2513804b2d40>

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/chinese-company-wins-contract-for-deep-sea-port-in-myanmar/>

A Myanmar Historian Looks at Rohingya

Dr. Aye Kyaw was born in Rakhine state. He has a BA in history and religion, an MA in Asian history and a BA in law from Rangoon University. He earned a Ph.D in Southeast Asia History at Monash University in Australia. Dr. Aye Kyaw taught at universities in Burma, Thailand and the US. Now retired, he lives in New York city. [A Historian Looks at Rohingya](#) published by irrawaddy.org on October 7, 2009 shed some lights on this subject from the insider view point. Here are some highlights:

“The clean AFPFL faction leader, prime minister U Nu, set up Mayu District in Arakan State. He registered Bengali as citizens through national registration and allowed them to vote. During the Colonial era, the Bengali started coming into Arakan to work. They mostly worked in the agricultural sector, and then returned when the work was done. One of the prominent leaders among Bengali was Sultan Mahmud. The AFPFL was weak in a sense. When U Nu allowed Bengalis to enter Mayu District that was the beginning of today’s Rohingya problem.”

Irrawaddy: Do you know when the use of the term "Rohingya" began?

“I think it appeared during the 1960s. Because even the Bengali leader, Sultan Mahmud, when he became a member of parliament, I don’t think he used the word "Rohingya." In earlier Burmese history and in Arakan history, I haven’t seen the word Rohinhya. Even after independence, there was no such word.”

Irrawaddy: What does "Rohingya" mean?

“When Sayagyi U Tha Tun was in good health, we visited whenever he was in Rangoon. We had conversations on several themes: literature, history and other social matters. Once, he explained to me the meaning of Rohingya. The word derived from an Arakan word, Lwintja. Lwintja in Arakan means leaves falling from trees and blowing around without any purpose.”

The statement makes one smile. According to this, the meaning of the word "Rohingya" was pondered over decades ago. If Dr. Aye Kyaw was right, the word *Lwintja* (လွင့်ကျ) might have been used as a poetic reference for the Rohingya by the Arakan people in a negative sense. Rohingya people, however, could not have been so proudly identifying themselves as leaves falling from the trees without any purpose or in another word "vagabond". Dr. Aye Kyaw further confirmed the existence of the word:

“The word basically means anything or anyone wandering around without a cause. I analyzed the word in the linguistic sense, and I once wrote an academic article in the *Pyinnya Padesa* journal, published by Rangoon University.”

Irrawaddy: Nowadays, many Arakans see the Rohingya as a threat. Why?

“The underlying reason was the emergence of the Mujahids, who started an armed insurrection in Arakan State to try to acquire their own land. Originally, they were Bengali from Bangladesh. In earlier days, they came to work in Arakan and returned to their homes when the work was done. Then they faced difficulties living in Bangladesh because it was so crowded. Afterward, the Mujahids attempted to set up a Muslim State in Buthee Taung, Maung Daw and Yatheh Taung townships of Mayu District, where U Nu had granted them the right to live.

When the Mujahids began to prosper, the Arakans didn't accept the idea. The Arakans see them as a danger, threatening their land, national identity and religion, and that is why the Arakans are so allergic to the word, Rohingya.”

Dr. Aye Kyaw also gave some clues as to why Rohingya was not listed as one of [135 ethnic groups](#) in Myanmar.

“In 1978, while under the Burma Socialist Programme Party rule, me, Dr. Maung Maung (the late President), and U San Thar Aung discussed a law on ethnic nationality. Dr. Maung Maung was an academic on law, I am an historian and U San Thar Aung was director general of the higher education department at that time. We discussed the matter in a room in the State Council office. I said that for recognizing an ethnic nationality in Burma, there was a census record during the Bodaw Phaya reign, made in the 18th century. It listed all nationalities living in Burma, and it mentioned Arakans, Karens and Mons (Talaings) in the survey. The document can be taken as a base, I suggested.”

“Dr. Maung Maung said that survey was too early. Then I suggested the year of 1824, a turning point in Burmese history when the British annexed lower Burma. Dr. Maung Maung agreed on that date, and we drafted a law that people living in Burma during 1824 were recognized as ethnic nationalities. We found no such word as Rohingya in that survey.”

1824 was the start of the First Anglo-Burmese War. It ended on 24 February 1826 and only then Arakan was annexed into British India. The first census of British Burma was taken only in the year 1871-1872. Mrauk-U, was captured during **ဘိုးတော်ဘုရား**: [Bodaw Phaya](#) reign in 1784. Dr. Aye Kyaw was probably making reference to the 1826 survey by the British diplomat Henry Burney (published 1842) based on **စစ်တမ်း**: **sit-tan** by the Burmese at the Court of Ava.

Early History from late 1700s to 1931

The first comprehensive census of British India was taken in the year 1871-1872 to obtain the statistics of the age, caste, religion, occupation, education of the population, and the results for each provinces had been carefully analyzed. In India, the census has been held every ten years since then, with the fifteenth national census held in 2011. It is reasonable to assume that those censuses would give some reliable clues to the population of Rohingya Muslims in Arakan (Rakhine) or in any other provinces of British India.

“By the time of the 1931 Census “Chittagonian” immigrants outnumbered indigenous Muslim residents of Arakan by at least four to one. During British rule, the designation “Rohingya” was unknown. After independence the indigenous Muslim community said that they wished to be called “Rwangya.” The Muslim Council of North Arakan said that they did not wish to be called “Chittagonians” but “Burmese Muslims” or “Arakan Muslims” and that **descendants of the Arab settlers** were actually known as “Ruwangya” or “Rushangya.” A Muslim scholar at Rangoon University, Ba Tha later suggested that they had originally been called “Roewenhnya” and after many years of intermarriage their descendants this term had morphed into “Roewengya.” “Rohingya” though was eventually to be the community’s designation, chosen under pressure from separatist Mujahid rebels supported from East Bengal.

No historical sources for the origins of these various R-words have ever been provided in support of any of these designations...”

— Derek Tonkin, a former British Ambassador to Thailand, Vietnam and Laos October 16, 2015 —

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/rohingya-breaking-the-deadlock/>

Derek Tonkin is also the Chairman of Network Myanmar. He in an another paper with the filename [Rohingya-Origins-121112.pdf](#), explained the origins of these various R-words:

This 1815 document describes Muslims as “Rooinga” or “Ruīnga”, one of only a very few references to “Rooinga” prior to 1824 and seemingly based on an isolated, possibly unique account by Dr Francis Buchanan, geographer, botanist and explorer who visited Amarapura (close to Mandalay) in 1799...

Network Myanmar has [more details \(Buchanan_New_Version.pdf\)](#):

“I shall now add three dialects, spoken in the Burman Empire, but evidently derived from the language of the Hindu nation. **The first is that spoken by the Mohammedans**, who have long settled in Arakan, and **who call themselves Rooinga**, or natives of Arakan. **The second dialect is that spoken by the Hindus of Arakan.** I procured it from a Brahmen and his attendants, who had been brought to Amarapura by the king’s eldest son, on his return from the conquest of Arakan. **They call themselves Rossawn**, and, for what reason I do not know, wanted to persuade me that theirs was the common language of Arakan. **Both these tribes, by the real natives of Arakan, are called Kulaw Yakain, or stranger Arakan.**”

— Buchanan, Francis, A comparative vocabulary of some of the languages spoken in the Burmese Empire (1801) —

That was the earliest record of Mohammedans who called themselves Rooinga. while native Arakan (Rakhine) people referred to them as Kulaw or ကုလ (ku1 la1) in Pali meaning foreign origin. To recap, Mohammedans (Muslims) called themselves Rooinga meaning "natives of Arakan" in their language, and Hindu called themselves Rossawn for unknown reason. Rakhine people called Mohammedans "strangers". When was that? Burmese king’s eldest son mentioned was သတိုးမင်းစော [Thado Minsaw](#). He captured Mrauk-U on the last day of 1784.

Derek Tonkin further explained:

“Roinga” is generally accepted to be a variation of the name “Mrohaung” or “Rohang”, the old Arakanese Kingdom which fell to the Burmese in 1785.

This linkage between Mohammedans in 1785 who called themselves "Roinga" with မြို့ဟောင်း “Mrohaung” is debatable.

Mrauk U was founded in 1430 by Rakhine King Mong Saw Mon and re-built by the help of Portuguese a century later. It lasted for 355 years until Burmese Royal Army led by သတိုးမင်းစော Thado Minsaw , son of King ဘိုးတော်ဘုရား Bodawpaya, captured it in the last day of 1784 and forcibly took Mahamuni Buddha image (now in Mandalay) to အမရပူရ Amarapura.

According to the Burmese/Rakhine account, the name "Mrohaung" meaning old city to Mrauk-U was given only in 1826 when the British shifted the seat of administration to Sittwe. (Ref: pg. 20, [THE GOLDEN MRAUK-U — An ancient Capital of Rakhine](#) by U Shwe Zan) In either case, it became an old city for all residents including the Rakhine people.

Indigenous Muslim residents of Arakan who wished to be called “Rwangya” after the independence mentioned by Derek Tonkin was recorded in the 1931 Census as Indo-Burman races. Arakan-Mahomedans (the same as reference by Buchanan in 1801) were the second largest in that race group.

Arakan-Mahomedans were clearly a group distinct from Indian races of Bengali and Chittagonian during the British survey in 1931, possibly descendents of earlier arrivals from Chittagong when the region was under Vesali kingdom of Arakan in the 7th century and Kingdom of Mrauk-U in the 1600s who were described as "Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Rooinga" in 1801 Francis Buchanan account. Since Chittagong was a trading post for Arabs in the 9th Century, the possibility of having mixed Arab blood among them could not be ruled out.

By looking at the tables from CENSUS OF INDIA, 1931 VOLUME XI BURMA Part I.—REPORT separately, it is not immediately apparent what language those Arakan-Mohammedans spoke. It was not listed under Indian Languages or anywhere else. Was it listed under Bengali just like for Chittagonians who spoke Bangali dialect?

CENSUS OF INDIA, 1931

VOLUME XI

BURMA

Part I.—REPORT

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/1931_Census_of_India-Vol-XI-Burma1-tpo.pdf

This 1931 Census was the last census conducted by the British in Burma that survives today. The return for another one taken in 1941 was lost during World War II. The next Census was taken by the Burmese government only in 1973.

S	Indo-Burman Races.			90,307	91,859
S1	Arakan-Mahomedan	Total		26,153	25,462
		<i>Muslim</i>		26,150	25,462
		<i>Buddhist</i>		3	...
S2	Zerbadi	Total		60,413	62,292
		<i>Muslim</i>		57,415	59,736
		<i>Buddhist</i>		2,637	2,180
		<i>Christian</i>		220	135
		<i>Others</i>		141	241
S3	Arakan-Kaman	Total		1,296	1,390
		<i>Muslim</i>		1,287	1,383
		<i>Buddhist</i>		9	7
S4	Myedu	Total		2,445	2,715
		<i>Muslim</i>		2,240	2,441
		<i>Buddhist</i>		205	274
X	Indian Races			733,911	283,914
X1	Assamese	Total		891	435
		<i>Hindu</i>		772	413
		<i>Others</i>		119	22
X2	Baluchi			53	11
X3	Bengali	Total		48,682	16,529
		<i>Muslim</i>		28,781	10,750
		<i>Hindu</i>		18,160	5,360
		<i>Buddhist</i>		1,491	309
		<i>Christian</i>		228	90
		<i>Others</i>		22	20
X4	Bhotia	Hindu		1	...
X5	Bihari			508	31
X6	Borah	Muslim		112	48
X7	Chittagonian	Total		163,912	88,240
		<i>Muslim</i>		157,155	86,749
		<i>Hindu</i>		4,891	873
		<i>Buddhist</i>		1,826	617
		<i>Others</i>		40	1

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/Foreign_Office-1931-Tables_on_Race_and_Language_in_the_1931_Census-en.pdf

X	Indian Languages	765,418	314,402	The distribution of Indian Languages as a whole is given in Part ID of this Table ; the distribution of separate languages is not given.
1	Assamese	362	341	
2	Balochi	77	11	
3	Bengali	242,415	134,579	
4	Bihari	44	13	
5	Central Pahari	2,542	427	Includes Garhwali and Kumaoni.
6	Eastern Pahari	25,724	12,657	Includes Naipali.
7	Gujarati /	12,511	5,195	
8	Kanarese	161	94	
9	Kashmiri	31	7	
10	Konkani	605	106	Includes Goanese.
11	Malayalam	11,343	875	
12	Marathi	480	193	
13	Oriya	57,247	3,435	
14	Pashto	1,510	493	
15	Punjabi	20,639	7,070	
16	Rajasthani	153	235	
17	Sindhi	343	88	
18	Tamil	118,659	65,448	
19	Telugu	124,483	36,157	
20	Western Hindi	145,589	46,978	Includes Hindustani, Hindi and Urdu.

The table with *Indian Languages* heading shows that there were 242,415 male and 134,579 female who spoke Bengali Language. A simple math by comparing this with the table with *Races* heading is needed to determine if the Arakan Mahomedans spoke a dialect of Bengali listed under Bengali.

Races	Male	Female
Chittagonian	163,912	88,240
Bengali	48,682	16,529
Zerbadi	60,413	62,292
Arakan-Mahomedan	26,153	25,462
Myedu	2,445	2,715
Arakan-Kaman	1,296	1,390
Chittagonian + Bengali	212,594	104,769
Chittagonian + Bengali + Zerbadi	273,007 (exceeded total Bengali speakers)	167,061 (exceeded total Bengali speakers)
All except Zerbadi	242,488 (close enough)	134,336 (close enough)

A small discrepancy could be due to some in mixed-race families who spoke more than one language. They could have been listed in categories other than Bengali speakers although listed as Indo-Burman races and vice versa. It appears that Arakan-Mahomedans spoke Bengali or Bengali dialect, but in terms of race, they were listed separately from Chittagonians and Bengali.

Who were the Zerbadi? They were described as Mahomedans of mixed Burmese and Indian origin. (Ref: [*Burma, Provincial Geographies of India*, pg. 139 by Herbert Thirkell White.](#)) Their numbers were too large to be Bengali speakers. It's not clear what language they spoke.

Some excerpts from the 1931 Census report by the British:

The Coast subdivision consists of the Akyab, Kyaukpyu and Sandoway districts in the north and the Amherst, Tavoy and Mergui districts in the south. These two-coastal strips are separated by the Delta subdivision. The northern part is roughly the old province of Arakan ; races of the Burma group (Arakanese, Yanbye, Burmese and Chaungtha) represent 64 per cent of the population, Indians 22 per cent (all but about six thousand are found in Akyab district), Indo-Burman races (mostly Arakan Mahomedans) 6 per cent, and Chins 6 percent.

Coast {Arakan},—The northern portion of the Coast subdivision consists of the Akyab, Kyaukpyu and Sandoway districts. The increase in the population of Akyab district was 11 per cent. There were considerable differences in the rates at which the populations of the separate townships increased:

Maungdaw and Buthidaung had increases of 18 and 16 per cent, respectively, while in Akyab and Kyauktaw the increase was only 4 per cent. Maungdaw and Buthidaung are largely composed of Indians, particularly Maungdaw. Indians form about one-third of the population of the district and there is considerable migration between the Akyab and Chittagong districts.

In the case of Akyab, the figure for the sea traffic between Akyab and India proper are not much use since the immigrants from Chittagong usually come to Akyab by land and return by sea, and no figures are available for land traffic. An estimate of the increase due to migration between Akyab and India proper can be made from figures from immigrants and emigrants for Akyab district at the 1921 and 1931 censuses and from the figures for the Indian population of Akyab district at those censuses. In paragraph 16 this increase is estimated to be about 21,000.

Burmese Word for Indians

In everyday usage, the word **ka1-la3** for Indian is neutral without any hint or intention of racial prejudice, just like the word တရုတ် **ta1-yoat** for Chinese. The fact is there are no other good alternatives to speak of. အိန္ဒိယလူမျိုး **ain2-di1-ya1 lu2-myo3** is too formal and applicable to those living in India. The colloquial Burmese language has

ဟိန္ဒူကုလား: **hin2-du2 ka1-la3** Hindu Indians

မွတ်စလင်ကုလား: **moot-sa1-lin2 ka1-la3** Muslim Indians

ပန်ချာပီကုလား: **pan2-cha2-bi2 ka1-la3** Punjabi

ချစ်တီးကုလား: **chit-ti3 ka1-la3** Tamil speaking Indians (money lenders)

ဘင်္ဂါလီကုလား: **bin2-ga2-li2 ka1-la3** Bengali (Bangladeshi)

ခေါ်တောကုလား: **khau2-tau3 ka1-la3** Chittagonians (Bangladeshi)

ဘရင်ဂျီကုလား: **ba1-yin2-ji2 ka1-la3**, descendants of Portuguese, and

ဂူဂျာရတီကုလား: **gu2-ja1-ra1-ti2 ka1-la3** (from Gujarat, Western India), etc..

Gurkhas originally from Nepal are not Indians and they are called just ဂေါ်ရခါး **gau2-ra1-kha3**. One famous Burmese Gurkha was ဗဟာဒူး [Suk Bahadur](#), captain of Myanmar national football team (1952-1970) and another one, Suk Bahadur Rai received the highest military honor "[Aung San Thuriya](#)" award in the Myanmar Army.

According to the dictionary by the Myanmar Language Commission, this word has a Pali root ကုလ *ku1-la1* meaning foreign origin. A related word with this root is ကုလသမဂ္ဂ *ku1-la1 thun1-met-gal* which refers to the United Nations, where သမဂ္ဂ *thun1-met-gal* stands for organization. The word ရိုဟင်ဂျာ *Rohingya*, however, did not make it into the dictionary entry, and its root could not be explained from Myanmar Language standpoint.

The word ကုလား *ka1-la3* is used by some as a derogatory term. The word has some association with unskilled laborers (coolie) that the British brought from India during the colonial time when Burma was part of British India. It may have some truth that the word also has a connotation of black or black skin derived from words such as *Kalo* in Bengali or *Kaalee* in Hindi, but not necessarily so in all cases. The word was even used to insult Dr. Michael Aris, the Caucasian British late husband of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by some who had no great affection for her. The word ကုလားဖြူ *ka1-la1-pfyu2* meaning White Indian at one time referred to the British Colonists.



Oscar Award Winning American Actor Morgan Freeman

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/myanmar-buddhist-group-criticizes-former-un-chief-kofi-annan/2016/08/30/ab3d6256-6e99-11e6-993f-73c693a89820_story.html

In a sense, the word ကုလား **ka1-la3** can sometimes be a xenophobic racial slur word similar to Mandarin Chinese 鬼子 (pinyin: *guǐzi*) or ghosts translated as "[foreign devils](#)". What was life of **ka1-la3** in Burma like?

Indians in British Burma

“In 1941, when the 2nd World War spread to Asia, Rangoon was predominantly an ‘Indian’ city in that the majority of its population consisted of people of subcontinental origin or descent. According to the 1931 census, there were slightly more than a million Indians in Burma at the time; of these some sixty per cent (617,521) were born in India. ”

“The consequences of Indian migration into Burma were too complex to go into here. Suffice it to say that through the 1920s and 30s, there were some powerful currents of hostility to the Indian presence in Burma. In 1930 bloody anti-Indian riots broke out in Rangoon and many thousands were killed. As a result of these developments, there was an increasing nervousness within the Indian population in Burma.”

— Exodus from Burma, 1941: A Personal Account, Parts 1, 2 & 3 by Amitav Ghosh | June 21, 2011 —

“**Burmese Indians** (Burmese: ကုလားလူမျိုး; MLCTS: *ku. la: lu myui:*) are a group of people of Indian origin who live in Burma. While Indians have lived in Burma for many centuries, **most** of the ancestors of the current Burmese Indian community emigrated to Burma from the start of British rule in the mid-19th century to the separation of British Burma from British India in 1937. During British times, ethnic Indians formed the backbone of the government and economy serving as soldiers, civil servants, merchants and moneylenders. A series of anti-Indian riots beginning in 1930 and mass emigration during the Japanese occupation of Burma followed by the forced expulsion of 1962 left ethnic Indians with a much reduced role in Burma.”

[Wikipedia](#)

The role of Buddhist Nationalists

In November 2015, five men were arrested for printing several hundred copies of a calendar in English, Burmese, and Arabic which stated that Rohingya Muslims are an ethnic-religious minority in Myanmar. The 2016 calendar printed at the request of Aung Khin, a 57-year old resident of Shwe Pyi Thar township in Yangon, mentioned the word Rohingya and contained a statement that there used to be a “Rohingya radio programme” in the 1950s Burma of Prime Minister U Nu. It had quotes from U Nu and other Rohingya historians. (Ref: <http://www.fortifyrights.org/publication-20151211.html>)

Highlights of report from www.myanmar-now.org:

YANGON (Myanmar Now)—Five people have been sent to jail awaiting trial for their involvement in printing a calendar that stated that Rohingya Muslims are an ethnic-religious minority in Myanmar, police said on Wednesday.

A court in Yangon’s Pazundaung Township had fined the men \$800 each on Monday for breaking Article 4 of the 2014 Printing and Publishing Law, which bars individuals from publishing materials that could damage national security and law and order. The men, who all live in Yangon, paid the fine and went home.

However on Tuesday morning they were re-arrested and sent to Insein Prison, Pazundaung Township police chief Maj. Khin Maung Lat told Myanmar Now.

They have been charged with Section 505 (b), which says those publishing information that may cause public fear or alarm and may incite people to commit offences “against the State or against the public tranquility” could be sent to prison, he said.

“I received an order from my superiors to arrest these men under a separate charge,” said Khin Maung Latt, adding that the men would appear in court on Dec. 1.

On Sunday, radical Buddhist monks of the nationalist Ma Ba Tha movement held a full-day meeting in North Dagon Township’s Magwe Pariyatti Monastery during which they condemned the calendar. In the days before, members of the movement had spread word of the existence of the calendar on social media. Monk Pamukka told the gathering that Ma Ba Tha members in Panzundaung and Shwepyithar townships should file a legal complaint with police against those who produced it.

Contacted by Myanmar Now on Wednesday, Pamukka said they felt the fine was inadequate and had plans to pressure the authorities if not further action was taken.

Who are the Ma Ba Tha Nationalists? (မာဘာ) Ma Ba Tha is an abbreviation of အမျိုးသား ဘာသာ သာသနာ စောင့်ရှောက်ရေး အဖွဲ့. a-myo3-tha3 ba2-dtha2 tha2-tha1-na2 soun1-shout-yay3 a-pfweare1 or Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion and Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion ([Patriotic Association of Myanmar](#)). **Some** of its members such as the Buddhist monk [Ashin Wirathu](#) are associated with [anti-Muslim 969 movement](#).



Source: <http://content.time.com/time/covers/asia/0,16641,20130701,00.html>

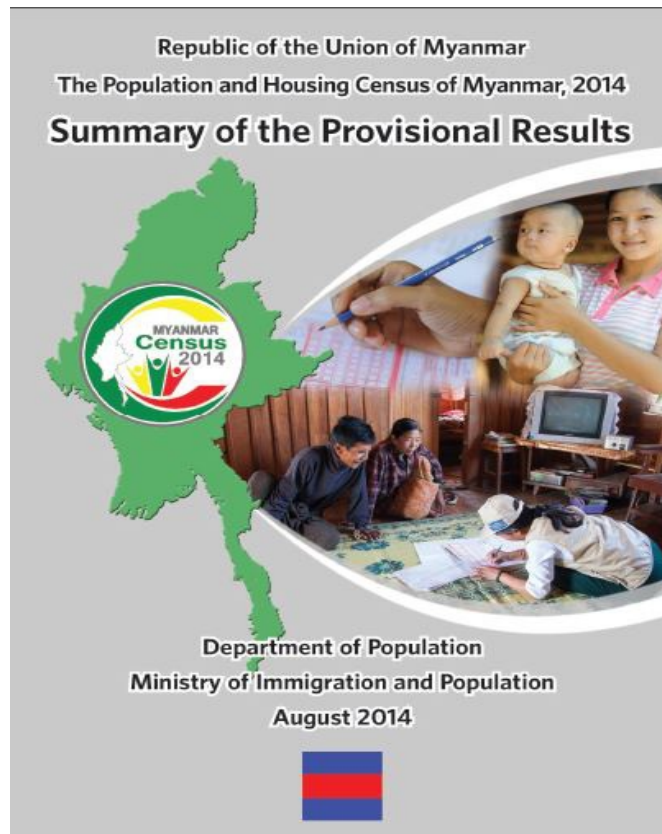
"You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog," Wirathu said, referring to Muslims. "If we are weak," he said, "our land will become Muslim."

— [Wikipedia](#) —

Analysis of 2014 Census

The fear of Muslims may not be unfounded. The survival instinct to protect the land from avalanche of new-comers can be found in the old Burmese saying:

မြေမျို၍ လူမျိုးမပြုတ်၊ လူမျိုးမှ လူမျိုးပြုတ်မည် | Myay2 myo2 yway1 lu2-myoy3 ma1 pyoat, lu2 myo2 hma1 lu2-myoy3 pyoat myi2 - Quicksand will not swallow culture and race, outsiders will swallow up the nation into extinction. Rakhine people reportedly fear that they will become minorities in their own state. How true is it?



The 2014 Census data (taken March 30 - April 10) for Rakhine State:

State/Region	Total	Male	Female
<i>Rakhine</i>	<i>3,188,963</i>	<i>1,529,606</i>	<i>1,659,357</i>
Rakhine (enumerated)	2,098,963	992,906	1,106,057
Rakhine (not enumerated)	1,090,000	536,700	553,300

Note: The numbers in **blue** provide estimates of people who were not enumerated in the census. The numbers in *italic* provide figures on the enumerated and the estimated population.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/wphc/Myanmar/MMR-2014-08-28-provres.pdf>

Who were not counted in Rakhine state as shown by **blue**? The figures roughly correspond to an estimated over a million people in Rakhine state who were referred to as Rohingyas in some media. Their citizenship could not be verified at that time.

In comparison, in 1931 Census, Arakanese (Rakhine people) accounted for 64%, Indians 22% and Arakan Mahomedans 6%. Since grouping categories and identification of the populations were different for different Census years under different governments, mango to mango comparison is not possible, and care should be taken in interpreting the data.

In 1931 during the colonial period, the ratio of Arakanese to Arakan Mahomedans was approximately 11:1, although ratio of Arakanese to all ကုလား: ka1-la2 (either Indian or Indian looking) was approximately 2:1.

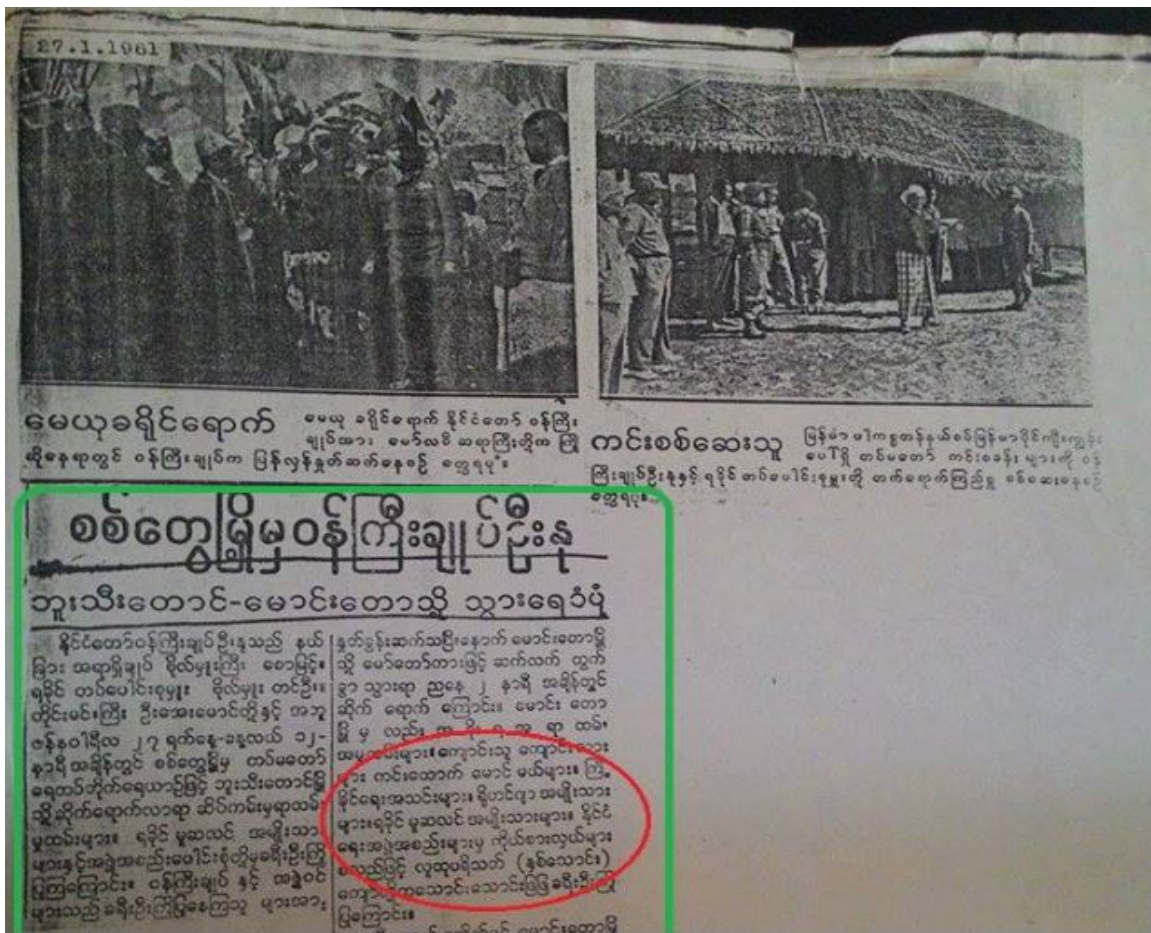
From the 1983 Census, the ratio of 1,461,041 non-Muslims to 584,518 Muslims out of 2,045,559 was 2.5:1. By the time of this census, it would have been impossible to separate out the small percentage of original Arakan Mahomedans blood (whose ancestors in 1784 called themselves Rooinga in 1801 Francis Buchanan's account) from descendents of a large numbers of migrants from Chittagong to Maungdaw and Buthidaung reported in 1931 British census. Since the descendants of both groups spoke Bengali dialects, they were all Bengali race from the Burmese government standpoint. It is also reasonable to assume that there were inter-marriages between the two groups of similar culture, language, and religious background over the course of several decades.

During the 2014 Census, a large percentage of population living in Rakhine state could not provide proof of citizenship and not enumerated. 2,098,963 (enumerated) to 1,090,000 (not enumerated) means the ratio was 1.92:1. It could not be determined from the 2014 census data alone if Myanmar attracted new arrivals from Bangladesh after 1983. Overseas "Rohingyas" population including those born outside Myanmar was estimated to be more than a million in 2014.

A typical Rohingya family has four or five surviving children but the numbers up to twenty eight have been recorded in rare cases.[3] [100] According to David Price of Harvard University, Rohingyas have 37% more children between 0 and 9 years old than Myanmar's national average.[3]

1950's and early 60's

1950s saw the beginning of armed groups called Mujahids and resurgence of the word "Rohingya". Online Rohingya website *Rohingya Vision* posted a page in history on January 27-28, 1961 when Prime Minister U Nu visited **ဘူးသီးတောင်** Buthitaung and **မောင်းတော** Maungdaw. It highlights a newspaper clipping in Burmese language that used the word **ရိုဟင်ဂျာ** (Rohingya).



<http://www.rvisiontv.com/rohingyas-welcomed-pm-u-nu/>

Who are the Mujahids?

Mujahid (Arabic: مجاهد) is a singular form of Mujahideen (Arabic: المجاهدين). It means the one who is engaged in jihad (Arabic: جهاد), an Islamic term referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain and spread the religion.

A sizable number of mujahideen were present and concentrated in the province of Arakan, Burma.[13] There were many Muslim Rebels in Rakhine State of Burma in 1946—a year after achieving Independence. Mir Kashem was the leader of the group known as "Mujahids", a group that consisted primarily of immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh. This particular movement was crushed by the Burmese Army in 1950s. Mir Kashem himself was assassinated in Cox's Bazar. This movement under Kashem collapsed after his death and his followers surrendered. When asked about their race, they called themselves as "Rohingyas".[14]

— [Wikipedia](#) —

1970's - 1980's

From 1971 to 1973, the [Bangladesh Liberation War](#) and its accompanying genocide saw an exodus of ten million Bengali refugees to neighboring countries. A large number of refugees settled in northern Rakhine and to a smaller extent in Chin State. In 1975, Bangladesh Ambassador to Burma, Khwaja Mohammed Kaiser admitted that there were upward of 500,000 trespassers in Arakan who Burma had some rights to eject and implored the Burmese authorities not to press the issue during political turmoils in Bangladesh.[23]

From 1971 to 1978, a number of Rakhine monks and Buddhists staged hunger strikes in Sittwe to force the government to tackle immigration issues which they believed to be causing a demographic shift in the region.[63] Ne Win's government requested UN to repatriate the war refugees and launched military operations which drove off around 200,000 people to Bangladesh. In 1978, the Bangladesh government protested against the Burmese government concerning "the expulsion by force of thousands of Burmese Muslim citizens to Bangladesh." The Burmese government responded that those expelled were Bangladesh citizens who had resided illegally in Burma. In July 1978, after intensive negotiations mediated by UN, Ne Win's government agreed to take back 200,000 refugees who settled in Arakan.[64] In 1982, the Burmese government enacted the citizenship law and declared the "Bengalis" are foreigners.[65]

There are widespread beliefs among Rakhine people that significant number of immigrants arrived even after the 1980s when the border was relatively unguarded. However, there is no documentation proof for these claims as the last census was conducted in 1983.[3] Successive Burmese governments have fortified the border and built up border guard forces.

— [Wikipedia](#) —

Bangladesh

With a population of 170 million, it is the world's [eighth-most populous country](#), the [fifth-most populous in Asia](#) and the third-most populous [Muslim-majority country](#) . The official [Bengali language](#) is the [seventh-most spoken language in the world](#) .

Bengal was absorbed into the [Muslim world](#) and ruled by [sultans](#) for four centuries. The [first British partition of Bengal](#) in 1905 created the province of [Eastern Bengal and Assam](#) . [East Bengal](#) joined the [Dominion of Pakistan](#) and was renamed as [East Pakistan](#) in 1955. It was separated from [West Pakistan](#) by 1,400 kilometres (870 mi) of Indian territory.

The [Bangladesh Liberation War](#) in 1971 resulted in the secession of East Pakistan as a new republic with a [secular multiparty parliamentary democracy](#) .^{[16][17][18]} A short-lived [one party state](#) and several [military coups](#) in 1975 established a [presidential government](#) .

Considered a [middle power](#) in international affairs and a major [developing country](#) , Bangladesh is listed as one of the [Next Eleven](#). Bangladesh has the third-largest [economy](#) and [military](#) in South Asia after India and Pakistan.

Historically renowned for [muslin](#) and [silk](#), modern Bangladesh is one of the world's leading [textile](#) producers. Its major trading partners include the European Union, the United States, Japan and the other nearby nations of China, Singapore, Malaysia and India.

— [Wikipedia](#) —

As Political Science Professor Sumit Ganguly at Indiana University Bloomington, U.S.A. mentioned earlier, the Rohingyas are closely linked through language, culture, and religion to the dominant Bengali population of Bangladesh. What was the likelihood of Bangladesh embracing a million stateless people in 2014 Census?

Here is a full report published by *The Straits Times* of Singapore on Jul 10, 2014, 7:53 pm SGT

Bangladesh bans marriages for Rohingya Muslim refugees

DHAKA (AFP) - Bangladesh said Thursday it has barred official marriages between its nationals and Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya refugees, whom it claims are attempting to wed to gain citizenship.

Law minister Syed Anisul Haque said he has ordered marriage registrars not to officiate any unions between Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingyas and also between Rohingyas themselves, thousands of whom have fled to Bangladesh.

He said Rohingyas try to use the resulting wedding certificate to gain Bangladeshi passports and other documents, while Rohingyas who marry Bangladeshis could automatically qualify for citizenship.

"By registering their marriage in Bangladesh they try to prove that they're Bangladeshi citizens," he told AFP.

"We've told the marriage registers not to list any marriage of Rohingyas and also between a Rohingya and a Bangladeshi citizen in Bangladesh."

Law ministry spokesman Abdullah Al Shahin said marriage registrars have been warned of punitive action if they officiate any such marriages.

There are around 300,000 Rohingyas living in Bangladesh's southern coastal districts bordering Myanmar who have fled alleged persecution in the Buddhist-majority nation since the 1990s.

Sectarian clashes flared up two years ago in Myanmar's western Rakhine state, with fighting that has displaced about 140,000 people, mainly stateless Rohingya Muslims.

Bangladesh recognises only around 28,000 of the refugees in its country, who are entitled to food, basic housing and other aid provided by the United Nations.

The rest of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh live in slums set up in cleared forests and on beaches.

Bangladesh border guards regularly turn back Rohingyas caught trying to cross the Myanmar border.

Rights groups and charities have criticised Bangladesh's treatment of Rohingyas, claiming they lack basic healthcare and many are on the verge of starvation.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/bangladesh-bans-marriages-for-rohingya-muslim-refugees>

Why is Bangladesh, the homeland of Bengali Muslims, reluctant to take on more Muslim Rohingya refugees? An obvious answer, it would seem, is Bangladesh's own poverty. However, the real explanation is more complex.

— [Professor Sumit Ganguly](#) —

Identification Cards History

In 1989, prior to [1990 general elections](#), government had started issuing new registration cards (pink cards) to Myanmar Citizens to replace the old identification cards first issued in 1952. **The replacement was gradual and not nationwide.** [Burma Socialist Programme Party](#) Chairman Ne Win had already resigned by then. Burma was under the military rule led by [General Saw Maung](#) of State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) following the events of 8-8-1988 mass demonstrations.

In this election the Rohingyas were not only allowed to vote but also, in their exercise of franchise, elected four Rohingya members of Parliament. U Chit Lwin (a) Ebrahim, Mr. Fazal Ahmed, U Kyaw Min (a) Shomshul Anwarul Haque, and U Tin Maung (a) Nur Ahmed have been elected as members of the Parliament.

The Rohingyas were not only permitted to vote but also to form their own political parties during the May 1990 election. Two parties were formed the Students and Youth League for Mayu Development and the National Democratic and Human Rights (NDPHR). The NDPHR won all four seats in Maung Daw and Buthidaung constituencies, and in each constituency votes for the two parties counted for 80 per cent of the total votes cast.

Although the name of Rohingya was not permitted to use in the party title, the NDPHR was allowed to produce a booklet in Burmese called 'Arakan and the Rohingya people: a short History' on August 31, 1991. According to the NDPHR sources, the permission to print this booklet was rescinded two months later.

The NDPHR also fielded candidates in four other constituencies; Kyuk Taw-1, Minbya-1, Mrauk U -2 and Sittwe -2, and they gained an average of 17 per cent of the votes while the Government- backed National Unity Party got only 13 per cent.

The elections of 1990 were free and fair. It was one of the freest and fairest that had taken place in this region at that time. But unfortunately, the results of the elections were not honoured.

<http://www.rohingyalanguage.com/2016/08/1990-multi-party-democracy-general-elections-and-the-rohingyas-enfranchisement.html>

White cards were first issued in 1993 under the State Law and Order Restoration Council. Back at the 2010 election. There were nearly 2.7 million eligible voters in Rakhine State. 750,000 were Bengalis or Rohingya holding white cards.

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/opinion/10076-white-cards-the-junta-s-toxic-legacy.html>

Although those who could not be verified as citizens per [Burma Citizenship Law of 1982](#) were issued "white cards" to replace their original registration cards instead of "pink cards" issued to the citizens, they retained the right to form political parties and to become party members. (Ref: Section 4a and 10e of the [Political Parties Registration Law](#) under SLORC military government signed by Senior General Than Shwe on 8 March 2010.) In the 2010 elections, National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD) won two seats in Rakhine state parliament out of 17 seats contested. (Ref: myanmar-now.org) NDPD is a Muslim party for Self-identified Rohingyas like U Khin Maung Myint. (Ref: Myanmar Times: [First shot fired in political rights battle](#), 3 October 2014)

In April 2014, a proposal was made in the parliament to amend this 2010 [Political Parties Registration Law](#) which allowed non-citizens to vote, form political parties, and stand for election to become members of parliament.

In the original draft, white-card holders were able to vote. However, parliament removed this clause when it approved the bill late last year. The president then sent it back to parliament, recommending MPs revert back to allowing white-card holders to vote.

Of course, ethnic Rakhine were angry at the decision and issued a statement saying they will not accept it. They are submitting the case to the Constitutional Tribunal.

Those holding these cards are banned from travelling without official permission. They also require permission to marry and their family planning has been controlled. That's why the international community has accused Myanmar of violating human rights in Rakhine State for many years.

(Ref: Myanmar Times - [White card or government political playing card?](#), 16 February 2015)

This issue was more complicated by the fact that "white cards" were issued not only to those who had previously held original identifications, but also issued to document those previously undocumented Bengali-Rohingya of Rakhine State, which included those whose parents or grandparents held original identifications. According to one estimate, 37.7% of those surveyed during 2014 Census had no form of ID. (Ref: [mmtimes.com the last two paragraph.](#))

2015 Racial and Religious Tensions

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-31421179>

Myanmar revokes Rohingya voting rights after protests

🕒 11 February 2015 | Asia

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Monks have been at the forefront of anti-Rohingya protests

Myanmar Authorities Step Up Collection of Temporary Identification Cards

2015-04-06

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<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/authorities-step-up-collection-of-white-cards-04062015152750.html>

Myanmar Striking Rohingya From Voter Rolls, Activists Say

By [THOMAS FULLER](#) AUG. 23, 2015

YANGON, Myanmar — As an elected lawmaker and member of Myanmar's governing party, U Shwe Maung attended dinners with the president and made speeches from the floor of Parliament. But this weekend, the country's election commission ruled that despite more than four years in office, he was not a citizen and thus was ineligible to run for re-election in landmark voting in November.

The election commission says it cannot allow Rohingya to register to vote because they do not have proof of citizenship. Earlier this year, President Thein Sein, acting under pressure from Buddhist nationalists, decreed that the special identity cards held by the Rohingya, known as white cards, would no longer be valid and that Rohingya would have to undergo a citizenship test in order to obtain new cards.

Tens of thousands of white cards were surrendered to the government. Other Rohingya lost all their possessions when they were chased from their homes by Buddhist mobs in a series of deadly pogroms that began in 2012.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/world/asia/myanmar-lawmaker-u-shwe-maung-barred-from-re-election-on-citizenship-grounds.html?_r=1

20,000 white card holders not allowed to vote

Submitted by mthan on Wed, 06/24/2015 - 16:06

Maungdaw – About 20,000 white card holders are not eligible to vote in 2015 general election in Maungdaw, according to a township election commission.

Among them, about 100 non-ethnics are also included.

The number of voters was over 250,000 in 2010 election as the white card holders were allowed to vote at that time.

“One ward in Maungdaw has 1,042 voters and ten non-ethnics are included. We have to tell the commission to check the voter list again whether there are people who are dead in the voter list or there have been extra people included in the list. We have to check the non-ethnics who are included in the list whether they have national registration cards or not. People are not interested in the announcement of voter list. One or two people came to check the voter list,” said Maung Ohn, vice chairperson of Arakan National Party in Maungdaw.

“We issued the voter list since June 21. However people who are holding temporary registration cards are not included in the list. If there is an error, we can correct as it is only the initial announcement,” said Maung Ohn Kyi, chairperson of the township election commission.

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/11828-president-signs-amendment-to-party-registration-law.html>

Green Cards

By mid June 2015, U Thein Sein government had collected about 390,000 "white cards" as part of the process to verify citizenship. Among them were more than 300,000 Bengali-Rohingyas out of estimated 800,000 people nationwide holding white cards. In the meantime, white card holders were given temporary light-blue "Green cards" as receipts with identification number, name of the holder, gender, date of birth, place of birth, marital status and father's name with visible identification marks in Burmese and English. Valid for two years and renewable, Green card holders were eligible for citizenship application in accordance with 1982 Citizenship Law.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/officials-issue-green-cards-to-muslims-in-rakhine-state-06152015145915.htm>

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15082-new-green-cards-meet-resistance.html>

As of mid June 2016, new NLD government continued with handing out those "Green cards", but not without complaint.

The cards being given out during the simultaneous census do not include race or religion in a bid to avoid controversial terminology and inflaming sectarian conflict. The cards include an identification number, the name of the holder, the name of the holder's father, and the holder's gender, date of birth and marital status.

But the intention of avoiding conflict by skipping over race has already backfired. Radio Free Asia reported that a village in Ponnagyun refused the cards and would not provide information to immigration officials, citing the inability to self-identify as Rohingya.

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/20746-pilot-census-lays-groundwork-for-citizenship-verification-in-rakhine.html>

Race and Religion Protection Laws

New govt to defend 'race and religion' laws at UN meeting

By Fiona Macgregor and Thu Thu Aung | Wednesday, 06 July 2016

The government is to defend a package of four controversial “protection of race and religion” laws at a key UN meeting on discrimination against women in Myanmar being held in Geneva tomorrow.



<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/21218-new-govt-to-defend-race-and-religion-laws-at-un-meeting.html>

Anti-immigrant sentiments in other parts of the world

Survival instinct and perceived threat of people who are of different skin color, culture and or way of life is not uncommon in other parts of the world.

In the U.S., there was an outrage by Asian American community when New York Times deputy Metro editor Michael Luo and his family were yelled at by a woman: "Go back to China."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/nyregion/go-back-to-china-readers-respond-to-racist-insults-shouted-at-a-new-york-times-editor.html>

In France, there was a controversy banning of burkinis as a beach wear in more than 30 French towns. Burkini is not a new French design which was causing indecent public exposure as one might expect. It covers the whole body except for the face, hands, and feet and worn mostly by Muslim women. French Court reversed the ban in August 2016, which followed less than a year after the events of [November 2015 Paris Attacks](#).



<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/26/europe/france-burkini-ban-court-ruling>

In Britain, 48% of the people cited immigration as [the reason for voting in favor of Brexit \(leaving European Union\)](#). To quote Wikipedia:

Inflows of EU nationals migrating to the UK stood at 268,000 in 2014, up from 201,000 in 2013. EU inflows were mainly flat for the 1991-2003 period, averaging close to 61,000 per year.

According to *The Economist*, areas that saw increases of over 200% in foreign born population between 2001 and 2014 saw a majority of voters back leave in 94% of cases. The Economist concluded 'High numbers of migrants don't bother Britons; high rates of change do.'

Timeline of the "R" Word in History

6th - 7th century	Chittagong (present day Bangladesh) was under the rule of Vesali (ဝေသာလီ Waithali) kingdom of Arakan.
1430 -1785	Mrauk-U was the last capital of Rakhine Kings.
1538	Arakanese Kingdom of Mrauk U regained control of Chittagong until its conquest by the Mughals.
1801	Francis Buchanan mentioned Mohammedans in Arakan who called themselves Rooinga.
1824- 1826	The First Anglo-Burmese War.
1871-1872	The first comprehensive census of British India.
1931	British Census shows that Arakan Mahomedans made up of 6 per cent in Arakan, but the word Rohingya did not appear in any of the censuses since 1871 to 1931 which were held every ten years. There were large numbers of Bengali speaking new immigrants from Chittagong and other parts of British India.
1950s	Beginning of armed groups called Mujahids and resurgence of the word Rohingya.
1952	Government started issuing Registration Cards.
January 27-28, 1961	Prime Minister U Nu visited ဘူးသီးတောင် Buthitaung and မောင်းတော Maungdaw. Possibility of the usage ရိုဟင်ဂျာ (Rohingya) in the Burmese newspaper.


1971 to 1973	Bangladesh Liberation War resulted in exodus of ten million Bengali refugees to neighboring countries. Birth of Bangladesh was followed by several military coups.
1975	Bangladesh Ambassador to Burma, Khwaja Mohammed Kaiser admitted that there were upward of 500,000 trespassers in Arakan .
1977	Ne Win's government drove off around 200,000 people from Burma to Bangladesh.
1978	Ne Win's government agreed to take back 200,000 refugees who settled in Arakan.
1989	New registration cards / Scrutiny cards / Pink cards were first issued to the Burmese Citizens.
1990	Self-identified as Rohingyas voted in elections. Four elected as members of Parliament.
1993	White cards were first issued to those who could not be verified as Citizens.
2010	White card holders were allowed to vote in elections. Self-identified Rohingyas won 2 seats in Rakhine state parliament out of 17 seats contested.
2012	The word "Rohingya" first got international attention after the Racial Riots . Some accounts gave 140,000 displaced people while some estimated 90,000. [12] [13] About 2,528 houses were burned, and of those, 1,336 belonged to Rohingyas and 1,192 belonged to Rakhines. [14]

2014	<p>Estimated 1,090,000 people in Rakhine State were not enumerated in the Nationwide Census taken from March 30 to April 10.</p> <p>Parliament debated on allowing white card holders to vote in the General Elections to be held the following year.</p>
2015	<p>White cards were revoked after protests. Citizenship verifications were in process. White card collection and issuing of "Green cards" as receipts started in mid June. Race and Religion were not identified in the Green cards to avoid controversy.</p>
2016	<p>As of mid June, new NLD government continues with issuing of "Green cards". Some refused the cards citing the inability to self-identify as Rohingya.</p> <p>Events following the border post attack in which nine Myanmar police were killed had raised the conflicts in the region to a new level not seen since 2012.</p>

Witnessing History in the Making

The Forbidden "R" word in Myanmar is [history in the making](#), and as such it could not be completed. We don't know how the story will end, or if there will ever be an ending. But, by being better informed about the past from several different perspectives, we may have a better chance for a better future by making better choices.

[U Razak](#), was a Muslim cabinet minister in Aung San's pre-independence interim government. He was the chairman of Burma Muslim Congress. His mother was a Burmese Buddhist woman, and father was an Indian police inspector of Islam faith. His brothers and sisters freely chose to be Buddhists. History would have been different today if [Bogyoke Aung San](#), U Razak and other cabinet members were not assassinated back in the gloomy morning of 19 July 1947. It could have been a different history where sons and daughters of Islam and Buddhist faiths walking hands in hands together, like brothers and sisters, building a better future in unison — a possible future in the past that could have been present today. That present never came.

But they did not die in vain. They have shown us the benchmark of what was possible — that Buddhists and Muslims could live in harmony. Now, it's time for the daughter to lead the country to what is possible.  **Thut Til** "Courage" is the word that she often uses. Only time will tell if she will leave a present for future generations.

Posted on the [language section of asiapeartravels.com](#) for free online study of Myanmar language, history, and culture.

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