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## Potential Terrorism Threats from Rohingya Refugees in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT:

The presence of more than one million *Rohingya* refugees in Bangladesh, many of whom are predicted to move en masse to Southeast Asian countries, presents a significant security challenge for Indonesia. Current refugee conditions in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, are not yet fully monitored, raising concerns about the infiltration of separatist militants or terrorist-affiliated groups posing as *Rohingya* refugees. This study aims to analyze the potential security threats posed by the influx of *Rohingya* refugees into Indonesia, with a particular focus on terrorism risks and national security implications. Utilizing a literature-based research approach, this study examines the dynamics of *Rohingya* refugees in Southeast Asian host countries and their potential links to terrorist movements. The intelligence function framework is applied to assess the extent of the threat, identify risk factors, and propose mitigation strategies. Findings indicate that while the majority of *Rohingya* refugees are victims of persecution, gaps in monitoring and refugee management may create opportunities for terrorist networks to exploit refugee flows. The study highlights the importance of integrating intelligence-based risk assessment with national resilience strategies to ensure early detection, effective response, and prevention of potential security threats. The implications underscore the need for enhanced regional cooperation, comprehensive refugee management policies, and multi-stakeholder involvement to safeguard Indonesia's national security while maintaining humanitarian principles.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Rohingya, Threat, Terrorism, Intelligence, Security, Resilience

### INTRODUCTION

Periods of civil unrest and persecution often result in population displacement and mass refugee migration across national borders (Salehyan, 2008). The Rohingya are one of the stateless refugee groups whose arrival has been massive in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. In Southeast Asia, the persecution of the Rohingya and mass displacement from Myanmar has resulted in one of the world's largest concentrations of refugees in Bangladesh (Mim, 2020).

As many as 1000 Rohingya Muslims entered Bangladesh within three days in 2009 saying that the military was increasingly persecuting them. They were evicted from their homes and continued to receive threats (Faye, 2021). The Rohingya refugee crisis escalated dramatically in 2017, when more than 740,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after a series of Myanmar military actions deemed a clearance operation that many international organizations also consider a crime of genocide.

Based on UNHCR data as of January 31, 2025, the Rohingya population in Myanmar and in neighboring countries is estimated at 1,775,150 individuals (*Stateless from Myanmar (Rohingya Refugees and asylum-seekers)*, t.t.). The majority of these refugees still live in Bangladesh, especially in Cox's Bazar District and Bhasan Char in Noakhali District. The distribution details based on UNHCR data as of December 31, 2024 are around 1,005,675 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, 109,700 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, 22,500 Rohingya refugees in India, 2,800 Rohingya refugees in Indonesia and 500 Rohingya refugees in Thailand. While the Rohingya in Myanmar amounted to 633,975.

The significant number of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district is gradually affecting the local law and order system, as reported by various newspapers. During October 2017, 30 law violations were reported to the police, and seven bodies were found near Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar district. Arms smuggling, drug smuggling (including Yaba), and underground political activities are examples of criminal activities by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Yasmin & Akther, 2020). The Rohingya refugee issue is creating a number of security concerns for Bangladesh and this is predicted to spread as a regional security issue if not resolved as soon as possible (Hossain dkk., 2020).

Previous research provides valuable insights but leave gaps in understanding the potential security threats related to Rohingya refugees. Minar (2021) analyzed the security implications of the mass influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh between 2017 and 2020. Using content analysis of news reports and local interviews, Minar concluded that the overall security threat was minimal, with only small-scale criminal activities reported. However, this study did not explore the possibility of militant groups infiltrating refugee flows or the application of intelligence frameworks to mitigate such risks.

The objective of this research is to analyze the potential terrorist threats associated with the influx of Rohingya refugees into Indonesia and to formulate effective intelligence-based mitigation strategies. The study contributes theoretically by enriching the literature on intelligence accountability concerning refugee migration and practically by providing a risk assessment model and policy recommendations for security agencies and policymakers to safeguard national resilience without neglecting humanitarian principles.

## RESEARCH METHODS

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This research method will use a literature study method sourced from various scientific journals, books, periodical reports and news in the media to make an accurate, factual and systematic description. The results of the analysis are used to draw a logical conclusion to the problem formulation in this paper by prioritizing the intelligence analysis approach in an effort to prevent the potential threat of acts of terrorism from turning into a real threat when faced with the presence of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. According to Jennifer Sims, In this study, intelligence analysis is operationalized as a structured approach to assessing risks by integrating multi-source information, evaluating the reliability of data, and producing actionable insights for decision-making. It involves evaluating the refugee situation in the context of national security through the lens of threat identification, risk assessment, and mitigation strategies. This process aligns with the intelligence cycle, which includes information collection, critical analysis, and

dissemination to inform stakeholders about potential threats. Above all, she emphasizes that good intelligence is not about getting it right but getting it more right than your opponent (Bay, 2007)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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### History of the Rohingya

The word “Rohingya” comes from the word “Rohai” or ‘Roshangee’, which is misinterpreted to mean “Rohingya”. These terms Rohai and Roshangee refer to the Muslim people living in ancient Arakan (Rohang, Roshang, or Roang) (*A History of Arakan (Past & Present)*, t.t.). A Rohingya activist explained during a discussion in Chittagong that the term “Rohangya” is a combination of two words, Rohang and Ya (Rohang+Ya) referring to the Rohang people. When talking about Rohingya or Bengali Muslims, when they want to identify someone by their region, they add “Ya” after the name of the region. In this way, to identify the Rohang people, they use Rohang-ya which then slightly changes to Rohingya (Haque, 2017).

Rohingya is a Muslim ethnic group originating from Myanmar, specifically from Rakhine state (formerly known as Arakan). If traced, traces of the Rohingya date back to the seventh century in the state of Rakhine, which was previously called the Kingdom of Arakan when there was no “nation-state” called Burma/Myanmar (Khan & Ahmed, 2020). They are considered one of the most unfairly treated minorities in the world. Although they have lived in the region for thousands of years, they are not recognized by the Myanmar government and receive no rights as citizens.

The history of the Rohingya begins with the arrival of Muslims to Arakan in the 15th century. Arakan has two main ethnic communities. The majority of Arakan's population, the Rohingya, follow Islam, while the Magh (Rakhaing), who are a minority, follow Buddhism (*A History of Arakan (Past & Present)*, t.t.). The Kingdom of Arakan, located along the western coast of Myanmar, has a long and complex historical period, from the formation of the kingdom to the emergence of the Rohingya ethnicity. It is important to note that the Rohingya did not suddenly appear in Arakan, but evidence has shown that they are descendants of Arabs who arrived 1200 years ago (Faye, 2021). During the British colonial period, many Muslims from Bengal came to Myanmar as migrant workers. However, in the late 18th century, the Kingdom of Arakan was conquered by Burma, resulting in a decline in its power and influence. During this period, many Arakanese, including the Rohingya, were affected by the political and social changes that took place. The Rohingya, who are predominantly Muslim, have deep historical roots in the region and claim to be the original inhabitants of Arakan.

The Myanmar government arbitrarily excluded the “Rohingya” from the list of citizens on the grounds that they were migrants after 1823, without considering their long history in Arakan. This step was taken deliberately by General Ne Win with the malicious intention of turning the Rohingya into “stateless people” so that he could expel them easily (*A History of Arakan (Past & Present)*, t.t.). Eventually large numbers of Rohingya fled beyond the borders to seek refuge from the extreme persecution. The frightening and brutal acts committed by the Myanmar armed

forces and local Rakhine Buddhists are a particularly egregious example of ethnic cleansing (Md. K. Rahman & Amin, 2024). Neighboring countries including Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, India, Thailand and Indonesia are affected by the mass Rohingya refugees (Uddin & Rahman, 2021).

After Myanmar's independence from Britain in 1948, the Myanmar government did not give the Rohingya the rights they were promised. Rohingya Muslims have continued to suffer human rights violations such as mass killings, rape, and torture since independence. This has led to an ongoing refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Thousands of Rohingya are currently displaced and rely on humanitarian aid to survive (Faye, 2021). Some of them have also experienced brutal repression from Myanmar border officials. For years, the Rohingya people have claimed that they are residents of the former Arakan, now known as the Rakhine Kingdom in Myanmar. While the Myanmar government denies the existence of Rohingya in Myanmar. The historical background of the Rohingya shows that they are descendants of Arab and Persian traders who settled in the Arakan region between the ninth and fifteenth centuries (Kipgen, 2014). In 1982, Myanmar's citizenship law did not list the Rohingya as one of the 135 recognized ethnic groups.

The Myanmar government regards the Rohingya as traitors. This perception has deep historical roots, especially during and after World War II. During the war, the Rohingya were considered pro-British because they were armed by the British to fight the Japanese, which led to significant intercommunal tensions and violence between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya. Prior to the British occupation of Myanmar, inter-ethnic harmony was in excellent condition, until the unwanted interference of British rule in the nineteenth century. During this period, ethnic tensions emerged between communities, dangerously fueled by the divide-and-rule tactics of the colonial government (Faye, 2021).

After the war, the newly independent Burmese government, under the leadership of General Ne Win, carried out several military operations against the Rohingya, seeing them as a threat to national unity and security. General Ne Win, who led the 1962 coup in Burma, played an important role in shaping the country's policies towards the Rohingya. Ne Win's government implemented policies that marginalized the Rohingya, including restrictions on their movement, marriage, and access to education and healthcare. Rohingya were also subjected to arrest, forced labor and other forms of persecution. This policy of Rohingya exclusion began after General Ne Win seized power in a staged military coup in 1962 and became head of state, Chairman of the Union Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister. After the Naga Min operation in 1978, and the first Rohingya refugee exodus, the Burmese government realized that the 1948 Citizenship Law had failed to manage citizenship and immigration issues. After three decades, the Government of Myanmar has realized that all these elements are interlinked and thus passed the 1982 Citizenship Law (Haque, 2017).

Under Ne Win's regime, the 1982 Citizenship Act was enacted. This law denied citizenship to the Rohingya, effectively rendering them stateless. The Act classified citizens into three categories: full citizens, associate citizens, and naturalized citizens. The Rohingya are excluded from all three categories, which has led to their continued statelessness and lack of legal rights. They are now considered foreigners due to their dual identity as Muslims and a "Bangla-speaking" minority living in Rakhine State, which is close to the Teknaf subdistrict in Bangladesh (Khan & Ahmed, 2020).

### **Rohingya Arrival in Indonesia**

Handling and monitoring Rohingya refugees is no easy task. For years, the Rohingya have been considered the most persecuted minority in the world. They fled a country that was considered unsafe and threatening to their people. During “Operation Naga Min” between March and August 1978, more than a quarter of a million people crossed the Naaf River and took refuge in Bangladeshi territory (Haque, 2017). The uncertainty of conditions in Bangladesh shelters and the many failed attempts at resettlement to third countries have led to a movement of Rohingya refugees in search of livable places such as Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. People in this context face a difficult choice: stay and risk harm, or flee to safety, leaving behind property, homeland, and friends and family. In addition, refugees often live in difficult conditions in their destination countries and are often dependent on humanitarian assistance (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006).

Over time, as their shelter conditions in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh became overcrowded and unsafe, refugees chose to travel to other countries by paying money to human smuggling networks to sail to neighboring countries in the Southeast Asian region. However, some researchers have noted that international migration in general, and refugee migration in particular, can have important security consequences, suggesting that refugee flows and population movements can fuel the spread of conflict both between countries and within countries. Refugees can change the ethnic composition of host countries, exacerbate economic competition, bring weapons, combatants and ideologies that support violence and mobilize opposition aimed at both their countries of origin and their host countries (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006).

Since 2015, according to the Directorate General of Immigration, a total of 1,537 Rohingya refugees have landed in Aceh. This condition continued to increase until February 2024, where there were 5,189 Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. The Aceh Province Immigration Division in the period December 2022-May 2024 has recorded as many as 2,717 Rohingya refugees stranded in Indonesia (Aceh and North Sumatra) who departed from Kutupalong Bangladesh shelter with the aim of Malaysia. The initial route of these boats was India, but they were stopped and given food aid by India. Then these ships tried to enter Thailand but were rejected and given warning shots by Thai marine security, until finally stranded in Aceh waters using wooden boats.

The majority religion of the population makes Indonesia, especially Aceh province, a favorite transit country for Rohingya refugees after Bangladesh no longer accommodates their needs. These Rohingya refugees are desperate to sail on wooden boats to Indonesia because they feel they do not receive proper facilities in Bangladesh. Aceh has become the main landing place for these refugees. Although the distance between Aceh and Myanmar can be considered relatively close, it takes an average of about 23 days to reach Aceh's waters using traditional boats (Arifin dkk., 2024). However, the trend is that when they arrive in Indonesia, some of them escape from the shelters to the city of Dumai (Riau Province) and Tanjung Balai Asahan Regency (North Sumatra Province) to then enter Malaysia illegally. Whereas in Indonesia they have been directly

handled by IOM and UNHCR with adequate daily facilities and health facilities. This is certainly contradictory to the reason they fled Bangladesh.

Initially, the Acehese community welcomed the Rohingya refugees. However, public sentiment changed when many Rohingya refugees were involved in illegal activities such as prostitution and theft in Aceh (BBC, 2024). This sparked conflict between the Acehese community and Rohingya refugees, leading to widespread rejection of their presence upon return to Aceh (Detik News, 2023). Tensions further escalated when Acehese students evicted Rohingya refugees, potentially causing deep trauma, especially among refugee children and women (BBC, 2023).

With the large influx of refugees who are traumatized, stressed and easily influenced, Rohingya refugees are targeted by criminals to carry out their illegal activities, including the spread of radicalism, terrorist networks and arms smuggling. Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazaar District are fertile ground for recruitment by Islamic militants (Idris, t.t.). The number of 1 million people from refugee camps in Bangladesh will be a big obstacle if Aceh is really used as a transit point. Rohingya refugees are expected to continue to arrive in the Aceh region if the implementation of this refugee handling has not created a deterrent effect.

### **Armed Militants among Rohingya Refugees**

Not all Rohingya are purely civilian refugees. In the border areas, there is very little presence of law enforcement agencies, which makes these areas ideal as safe havens and for training for terrorist and insurgent groups. Moreover, having established a solid network, transnational extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda are likely to capitalize on the plight of Rohingya refugees to push religious identity politics and encourage members to carry out violent terror attacks in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia (Mallick, 2020).

Within the Rohingya refugees are armed militant groups including the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO). Some Rohingya organizations actively collaborate with banned Islamist groups such as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami (Huji). Asian security services have reported that Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists, linked to Al-Qaeda, are hiding in Rohingya camps. Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is an Arakan Rohingya Liberation Army group founded by 20 Rohingya leaders in Mecca. From there, the organization is monitored and has established connections in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India (Halim, 2023). ARSA was previously a little-known organization called Harkat al Yaqeen (Faith Movement) that emerged under the leadership of Ataullah abu Ammar Jununi, a Rohingya born in Karachi, Pakistan and raised in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Bangladeshi sources believe that ARSA was behind the killing of a paramilitary commander in May 2016 and the looting of 11 weapons from the Shalbagan Ansar barracks near the Rohingya camp in Mochni area under Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar district (Bashar, t.t.).

Since 1978, Bangladesh has been hosting Rohingya Muslims, and today, more than a million Rohingya refugees and illegal immigrants live in Bangladesh. Both IS and Al Qaeda have consistently used the Rohingya issue to advance their propaganda (Bashar, 2021). Bangladeshi

police found evidence of ARSA's links to Ansar al Islam (Aal) and also links to al-Qaeda and other Islamist factions in Bangladesh, including Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). Bangladeshi security agencies have also conducted sporadic raids against ARSA and other factions and cracked down on the trafficking of firearms and drugs, namely meth and yaba in refugee camps and at the border. Bangladeshi police have done this by arresting several senior ARSA members, including ARSA's spiritual head of Ulema (Roul, t.t.).

Al Qaeda (AQ, alt. Al Qaida or Al Qa'eda) is a transnational Sunni Islamic terrorist organization with a network of affiliates founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988. The group gained global notoriety after carrying out the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks in the United States. The United States designated Al Qaeda as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 1999 (Thomas, t.t.). Al Qaeda only began to show interest in the plight of the Rohingya as early as 2013. Therefore, on the 12th anniversary of the 911 Incident, Ayman al-Zawahiri referred to the oppression of the Rohingya in Myanmar. In August 2014, Zawahiri launched Al Qaeda of the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) which includes Myanmar as its area of operation (Singh, t.t.). Ansar al Islam is officially recognized by Al Qaeda as part of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and as AQ's representative group in Bangladesh. According to Bangladeshi authorities, ARSA also appears to be a threat in the region and has exploited the conflict to recruit members among the Rohingya community, and is allegedly active in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp (Shukri, 2021).

In recent years, Ansar al Islam has tried to send teams of fighters to Myanmar but they were unsuccessful as Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies foiled the efforts of the banned organization in Bangladesh. Ansar al Islam has a significant following in Bangladesh and the group is mostly involved in targeted killings. Ansar al Islam is led by Ziaul Haq, a major who was dismissed from the Bangladeshi armed forces. Through its Bangladeshi affiliate, Ansar al Islam, Al Qaeda has provided training and support to RSO militants (Bashar, t.t.). The Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs through the Prevention of Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism and Proceeds of Illegal Activities (Declaration of Specified Entities and Reporting Requirements) Amendment Act 2019 Article 66B reference number KDN.K.8-2019 mentioned that ARSA was included in the specified entity sanctions for participating in the commission of acts of terrorism and facilitating the commission of acts of terrorism (*Malaysia MOHA Sanctions List*, t.t.).

In addition to ARSA, there is also the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) which is a Rohingya armed group that emerged in the southeastern region of Bangladesh in the early 1990s. (RSO) was founded in 1982 and remained active in Bangladesh until the mid-2000s. The group used Cox's Bazar as its base. The RSO has a significant arsenal of submachine guns, AK-47 assault rifles, RPG-2 rocket launchers, claymore mines, and explosives (Bashar, t.t.). Andrew Selth (2003) in "Burma's Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorized" claimed that RSO activists were trained under Taliban commanders in Afghanistan and found Rohingya links to the 2001 9/11 attacks in the United States (Halim, 2023). The International Crisis Group in its 2016 publication on the Rakhine insurgency transparently interpreted that Rohingya insurgent leaders received training from Pakistan and Afghanistan-based terrorist groups, Laskar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Al Qaeda.

The Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) originally based in Arakan has gained wide recognition. They support autonomy or independence for the Rohingya. However, as the turmoil became more detrimental, they continued their operations into Southeast Bangladesh. Bangladeshi security forces arrested a leading explosives expert Sumon, of the Islamic terrorist organization Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), in the Dhaka area. The explosives expert revealed that JMB has close operational links with RSO. Sumon told his investigators that the RSO had provided terrorist training to various Islamic militants in Bangladesh since the 1980s and that he and other JMB operatives had been trained by RSO weapons experts at a camp near the Myanmar border (U. Rahman, 2010).

A top official of Bangladesh's Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) said that members of JMB (a terrorist organization in Bangladesh) have been working in Rohingya refugee camps since 2016 and recruiting members behind aid and funding for Rohingya camps (Alam, 2022). In June 2019, Bangladesh Police found 3 Rohingya extremists with many extremist symbols such as bomb-making materials, local weapons, gunpowder, etc. In September 2018, police found 5 Rohingyas burnt by their own bomb explosions. Such incidents may show traces of Rohingya joining extremist groups (Hossain dkk., 2020). Thus, with the findings of the Bangladeshi police that among the Rohingya refugees there are armed groups associated with ARSA and RSO who also have links to Ansar Al Islam in Kurdistan and other Mujahideen factions in Bangladesh affiliated with Al Qaeda as well as the Malaysian Government's decision to designate ARSA as a terrorist group, it is important to identify all Rohingya refugees entering Indonesia to map the potential terrorist threats that are also carried by Rohingya refugees who forcibly migrate to Indonesia.

### **Traces of Terrorism on Social Media**

Bangladesh has seen a steady increase in internet-based radicalization. Since 2015, two Islamic terrorist groups; Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarul Islam (hereafter Ansar) have become dominant and active in carrying out terrorist activities (Minz & Kujur, 2024). IS and Al Qaeda propaganda materials are easily available on the internet, where writings about IS and Al Qaeda leaders, operating methodologies and success stories of their attacks are regularly posted on Facebook groups (Bashar, 2021).

Steckman in his research titled *The Shadow of Jihadist Extremism* found that along with the intensification of social media networks and mobile technology in the country, the danger of jihadist extremists being able to spread their ideology through these platforms in an attempt to expand their influence, and eventually lead to their concept of caliphate should not be ignored (Chan dkk., 2015). Most of the Rohingya refugees are radicalized and have an extreme mentality in terms of religion, and they use the internet to spread radicalization not only among Rohingya refugees but also in local communities as many of the local communities are connected to refugees through social media (Md. Z. Rahman & Dodul, 2020).

Furthermore, Fathali M. Moghaddam's *The Staircase to Terrorism Model*, which outlines the psychological processes that lead to radicalization, provides a framework for understanding how

vulnerable populations, such as the Rohingya, can potentially engage in extremist activities. Moghaddam's model depicts radicalization as a gradual progression up a metaphorical staircase, beginning with perceptions of injustice and culminating in terrorist acts (Uppal dkk., 2025). Even with the recent concept of Shortcut to Terrorism, the second to fifth steps of the Moghaddam Model can be reached through shortcuts based on activities carried out on the internet. Rohingya refugees who experience trauma and marginalization are potentially more vulnerable to extremist influence, especially through social media which can accelerate the radicalization process without direct involvement with terrorist groups. This is in line with the finding that many terrorists in Indonesia are exposed to radical information through the internet, which leads to self-radicalization. The process involves intensive exploration of the internet by people previously attracted to radicalism content that eventually leads to self-radicalization and subsequent acts of terrorism ("SHORTCUT TO TERRORISM," 2022).

Online extremists in Indonesia have expressed their desire to wage "jihad" on behalf of the Rohingya, with some supporters hoping that 'mujahideen' will be able to smuggle into Myanmar. Some Indonesian social media users have peppered their Facebook pages with Rohingya-related propaganda posts and images, including maps that provide possible travel routes for potential Indonesian jihadists to enter Myanmar via Aceh and have even gone so far as to declare their readiness to become suicide bombers on behalf of the Rohingya (Singh & Haziq, t.t.).

### **Potential Terrorism from Rohingya Refugees in Indonesia**

Various crimes based on radicalism and terrorism have shaken Indonesia and disrupted the security and welfare of its people, especially since the reform era. Incidents such as the Bali bombing in 2002 that claimed many lives, the Australian Embassy bombing in 2004 that killed 9 people, the JW Marriott Hotel bombing in 2009 that caused 12 fatalities, and the Ritz Carlton Hotel bombing that killed 5 people are just some of the many events across Indonesia caused by terrorist acts (Dedi Kurnia dkk., 2023). These terrorist activities are events of the past that have greatly impacted stability and security in Indonesia.

The large influx of refugees into Indonesia through Aceh brings potential security threats, including the possible presence of separatist militants disguised as Rohingya refugees. The role of UNHCR, which is not matched by the implementation of placement to third countries, has resulted in the accumulation of Rohingya refugees in shelter countries. Refugee status that is universally applicable and protected by UNHCR cannot be enforced by immigration law which causes refugees to move freely from one place to another and even between countries. There are no rules governing offenses committed by Rohingya refugees.

Recurrent refugee flows are a source of international conflict, they generate instability in neighboring countries and trigger interventions by host countries and regional actors, and refugee camps can serve as bases and sanctuaries for armed groups that become sources of insurgency, resistance, and terrorist movements. Militarization of refugee camps creates security problems for countries of origin, host countries, and even internationally as graphically illustrated by the situation in Eastern Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) in 1996-1997 (Loescher & Milner, 2005).

The activities carried out by the spreaders of these teachings are to infiltrate the refugee camps of Rohingya refugees and brainwash the refugees to be infiltrated with heresy, until then

the refugees who have been successfully mindwashed are offered to join one of these extremist members. This terrorist network has links to high-profile terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda as well as local terrorist networks that also finance the group's operations. The refugees who have been successfully mindwashed begin to carry out their actions to influence other refugees, so that the spread of radicalism and terrorism is growing and expanding among refugees, this is very dangerous if it continues, left unchecked, especially very dangerous for national security (Pertiwi, 2021).

In May 2013, after the 2012 Rohingya refugee crisis, Indonesians such as Chep Hermawan of the Islamic Reformist Movement (GARIS), Jakfar Shidiq of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and Bernard Abdul Jabbar of the Rohingya-Arakan Muslim Advocacy Committee (KAMRA) decided that the only solution to the alleged violence against the Rohingya was to wage jihad. Chep Hermawan is also the person responsible for sending several Indonesians to Syria to join the terrorist group called the Islamic State (IS); including BahrumSyah, the leader of Katibah Nusantara in Syria. Also in 2013, as reported by The Jakarta Post, two Rohingya leaders had traveled to Indonesia to meet with hardline groups, apparently 'shopping' for fighters, weapons, cash and bomb-making instructors (Singh & Haziq, t.t.).

Bertil Lintner (2001) in Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation describes how the Rohingya armed group, Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) emerged in southeastern Bangladesh in the early 1990s. Utpala Rahman (2010) claimed that the RSO was responsible for the formation of Islamic militant groups (JMB) in Bangladesh. International Crisis Group (2016), in a report titled, Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State transparently interpreted that Rohingya insurgent leaders received training from Pakistan and Afghanistan-based terrorist groups, Laskar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Al-Qaeda (Halim, 2023).

With the findings of the Bangladeshi police that among the Rohingya refugees there are armed groups associated with ARSA and RSO who also have links to Ansar Al Islam in Kurdistan and other Mujahideen factions in Bangladesh affiliated with Al Qaeda as well as the Malaysian Government's decision to designate ARSA as a sanctioned group for involvement in terrorism activities, it is therefore important to identify all Rohingya refugees entering Indonesia to map the potential terrorism threats that are also carried by Rohingya refugees who forcibly migrate to Indonesia. The Rohingya problem cannot be solved by one country alone, but requires a joint effort from countries. The Rohingya refugee crisis has been described as a "time bomb" waiting to explode, which will affect the security of surrounding countries (Minz & Kujur, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Not all *Rohingya* refugees can be considered solely civilian, as armed militant groups such as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) have been identified among them, with established links to Ansar Al-Islam in Kurdistan and Al-Qaeda-affiliated Mujahideen factions in Bangladesh. This highlights the critical need for Indonesia to implement robust screening mechanisms, intelligence-sharing protocols, and enhanced inter-agency coordination, especially for refugees entering through Aceh, to prevent terrorist infiltration. Additionally, Indonesia should strengthen national counter-radicalization strategies by incorporating community engagement programs to mitigate social conflict and reduce recruitment opportunities by separatist or extremist groups like GAM and transnational

terrorist organizations. Given the study's reliance on secondary data, future research should prioritize field-based investigations, foster intergovernmental intelligence collaboration, and employ policy simulations to develop effective frameworks for balancing refugee security management with humanitarian responsibilities.

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