

Silence in the EU institutions as sexual violence against women is employed in Myanmar

Written by Julie Ward on 23 July 2018 in Opinion
Opinion

Sexual violence is being used as a tool of terror against Rohingya women, writes Julie Ward.



Julie Ward | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

There is a human crisis on Myanmar's western border. Since 1982, the Rohingya people have been denied citizenship, making them vulnerable to government discrimination and violence.

Several UN bodies and NGOs have labelled the ongoing abuses perpetrated by the Myanmar government against the Rohingya as "textbook ethnic cleansing". One element of this abuse that has not been adequately addressed by the international community is the epidemic of sexual violence against women.

Rape, including gang rape, is being used as a tool of terror against Rohingya women. UN special representative on sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Pateer, has described the situation as “a calculated tool of terror aimed at the extermination and removal of the Rohingya as a group.”

RELATED CONTENT

- [Amjad Bashir: Myanmar: The world is watching as human rights collapse](#) [1]
 - [European Parliament has been told the EU remains “very concerned” about the plight of Rohingya refugees](#) [2]
 - [Rohingya crisis: MEPs urge EU to 'significantly increase pressure' on Myanmar](#) [3]
-

Survivors of the brutal state-sponsored persecution have testified to the abhorrent circumstances in which they have been sexually assaulted, raped and tortured. Primarily women, these people have also testified about the inhumane execution tactics employed against their sisters, mothers and friends.

The UN investigation on the use of sexual violence in Myanmar concluded that 52 per cent of women had reported being raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence.

The majority of these women reported gang rape at the hands of Myanmar’s autonomous military, the Tamadaw.

Consequent to sexual brutality, women who survive the horrors of persecution often cross the Bangladeshi border pregnant from the attacks. As a result of cultural norms, women and girls face many barriers to accessing reproductive rights, and are performing underground abortions, which further endangers their health and survival.

Many of these women are traumatised by their experiences and their unique needs are largely unmet in refugee camps in Bangladesh, as less than 20 per cent of Rohingya refugees have access to post-rape treatment.

Bangladeshi refugee camps have also proven to be an unsafe place for women. Stateless Rohingya women have been targets for criminal networks that operate in the region.

Human trafficking is rampant, and displaced women are particularly vulnerable to forced marriage or sex slavery. The recent increase of refugees from Myanmar has fuelled the sex trade in Bangladesh.

Kateryna Ardayana, counter-trafficking expert of the International Organisation for Migration, has warned of the urgency for the international community to act. In her own words, “Rohingya refugees need preventative and proactive action now to mitigate risks of human trafficking, and the survivors need help - before this spirals out of control.”

Many parliamentarians have taken note of the special burden Rohingya people are facing and have been strong in their support. British MEP Wajid Khan stated, “I’ve campaigned hard over the disgraceful violence against the Rohingya at the hands of the Myanmar government and military: any path to a return for the Rohingya Muslims must not further compound their shocking treatment.” Surely, pervasive violence against women is one of the compounding elements to which my colleague is referring.

Meanwhile, the European Union has adopted a €5m programme to support the refugees in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the framework of this programme fails to adequately address the issue of sexual violence. Given the evidence, the EU's failure to incorporate stronger initiatives for the protection of women's rights leads one to question the Union's dedication to its core pillars of female empowerment.

The EU must take action in order to avoid further violations of the most basic rights of women in both Bangladesh and Myanmar.

About the author

Julie Ward (S&D, UK) is a substitute member of Parliament's women's rights and gender equality committee

Tags

[Foreign Affairs](#) [4]

[Justice and Rights](#) [5]

Categories

[Gender equality](#) [6]

[International Relations](#) [7]



The

Parliament Magazine is a Dods Group plc title

Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)

[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)

[EventsDods](#)

[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe HouseThe Parliament MagazineHolyrood Total PoliticsPublic Affairs NewsCivil Service World PublicTechnology Training JournalDods Parliamentary CompanionVacher's Quarterly The European Union and Public Affairs Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster BriefingDigital Health & Care ScotlandMEP AwardsThe Skills SummitScottish Public Service AwardsPublic Sector Procurement SummitPublic Sector ICT SummitCyber Security SummitCyber Security 2017Training Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and Care Innovation ExpoCivil Service LiveCivil Service AwardsChief Nursing Officer for](#)

[England's SummitWomen into LeadershipThe Youth Justice ConventionSocitm Spring ConferenceNHSCC Annual Members' EventDods at Party Conference](#)

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/silence-eu-institutions-sexual-violence-against-women-employed-myanmar>

Links

[1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/myanmar-world-watching-human-rights-collapse>

[2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-remains-very-concerned-about-rohingya-crisis-parliament-told>

[3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/rohingya-crisis-meps-urge-eu-significantly-increase-pressure-myanmar>

[4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>

[5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>

[6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/gender-equality>

[7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>