

UTMUN



SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE

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A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome all of you to UTMUN 2019! My name is Ruvanya Kasturiarachchi, and I am honored to be your director of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee this year. I believe we have an exciting time of debating ahead of us, tackling relevant and real world issue surrounding the topics of the Rohingya Crisis and the Belize/Guatemala Border Dispute. I look forward to hearing each and every one of your voices, and hope to promote thoughtful and insightful debate.

This committee is new to UTMUN this year, and we hope to focus on the historical contexts and underlying global conflict. Stemming from systemic issues, lack of infrastructure or funding, political instability, poor social integration, etc. These topics will be unpacked during debate that engages not only knowledge of the Rohingya Crisis and Belize/Guatemala border dispute, but the causes of these issues, how they were handled by the global community, and most importantly what can be done in order to bring peace and an effective resolution.

The best delegates are individuals who are able to clearly express their points to the rest of the committee, who frequently engage themselves in debate, challenge fellow delegates with new viewpoints and ways of approaching the issues being discussed. In order to find success within this committee, delegates must advocate for their countries policies, listen to the delegates around them and respond in a diplomatic manner that allows for the assertion of well thought out points and reasoning, while maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment for debates to take place. These are the individuals who are able to successfully embody what it means to be a delegate for the United Nations.

In preparation for the conference, I would strongly encourage all of you to conduct further research on each of the topics, focusing on the underlying commonalities between the two issues, and other global conflict as a whole. We have divided up the background guide in a manor that address the key areas of focus, but under such broad subtopics, you may find certain issues draw you in as a person. Whether that be history, political climate, or the role of the UN, having researched such areas will give you a greater understanding of the scope of both topics, as well as the ability to speak to certain issues brought up in debate regarding each subtopic. We anticipate that delegates will have read the rules and procedures that must be followed, and would suggest that delegates come prepared with points and questions to raise in discussion with fellow delegates prior to the conference.

My team and I are very excited to meet all of you, and see the debates begin to unfold. We expect you will walk away from this incredible experience with a new found lens on how to critically analyze and immerse yourself in engaging global issues. Goodluck to you all and we look forward to seeing you all in February!

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TOPIC A: ROHINGYA CRISIS

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group located in the Rakhine State on the west coast of Myanmar—a nation with a predominantly Buddhist population. The Rohingya face institutional persecution under the current government by being denied both citizenship and recognition as one of Myanmar's many ethnic groups. They also encounter state-sponsored violence as the military targets their people and burns down their villages. Being treated as illegal immigrants, laws discriminate against them by limiting educational opportunities, restricting movement, and removing people from their land.

Due to their increased persecution and destruction of their villages, the Rohingya have resorted to fleeing in masses to neighbouring Bangladesh. Many refugee camps have become massively overpopulated, yet more and more Rohingya continue to flee and thus expand the camps. The UN has recognized this presently as the fastest growing crisis in the world¹. There is an enormous need for food, water, shelter, and medical aid in these places.

The question that rests upon the international community is whether or not intervention should be permitted. If so, what actions should be taken, and to what extent may they be performed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

History of the Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya, with approximately one million in population at the beginning of 2017, resides in the Rakhine State, representing the largest Muslim ethnicity in Myanmar—a predominantly Buddhist country².

Spread of Rohingya inside and outside Myanmar

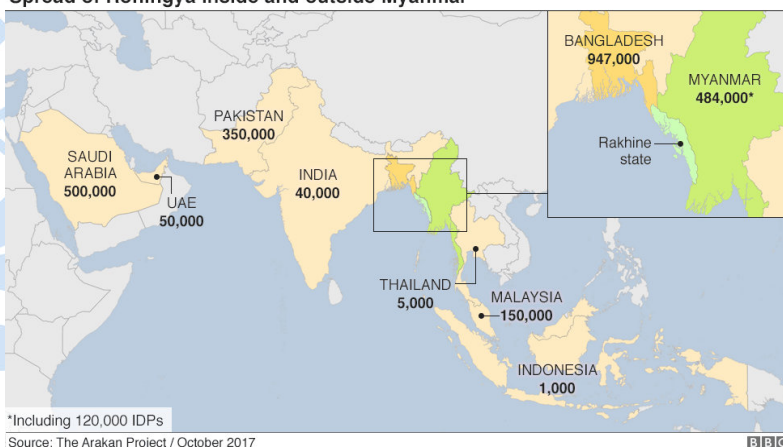


Figure 1 ³

¹ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

² "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

³ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

During British colonization of Myanmar (then called Burma) in the 17th century, expanding rice cultivation required migrant labour, which then encouraged Rohingya migrants to enter Myanmar from Bengal, increasing the Muslim population significantly⁴. During World War II, the British promised the Rohingya a self-governing state in exchange for their support while Rakhine Buddhists were supporters of the Japanese forces⁵. In 1948, Myanmar gained independence from Britain⁶, allowing the government to pass the *Union Citizenship Act*, not including the Rohingya as one of the country's 135 official ethnic groups⁷. In 1962, a military coup led to the development of a single party, military-ruled governance that would rule over Myanmar for the following sixty years⁸, worsening the circumstances for the Rohingya. Burmese army tortured, raped, and killed the Rohingya population upon the authorities viewing the ethnicity as a threat to Burmese nationalist identity⁹. This led to mass expulsion of the group in 1977 and 1992 from Myanmar to Bangladesh, creating a refugee crisis¹⁰. Following the *Union Citizenship Act*, the Myanmar government enacted *The Citizenship Act* in 1982, classifying the Rohingya as illegal immigrants that entered the country under British colonization, officially denying their citizenship or rendering them stateless¹¹.

Current Crisis

The ongoing humanitarian crisis began in 2016, where 300 Rohingya men assaulted police posts, identifying themselves as an insurgent group, known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)¹². The Myanmar military responded by an "ethnic cleansing operation", according to the Human Rights Watch, which includes genocide, sexual violence, and

⁴ Abdelkader, Engy, and Rutgers University. "The History of the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya." The conversation. September 19, 2018. <http://theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040>.

⁵ Hunt, Katie. "Rohingya Crisis: How We Got Here." CNN. November 13, 2017. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/12/asia/rohingya-crisis-timeline/index.html>.

⁶ Abdelkader, Engy. "The Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar: Past, Present, and Future." *Oregon Review of International Law* 15, no. 3 (2013): 393. <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/17966>.

⁷ Mohdin, Aamna. "A Brief History of the Word 'Rohingya' at the Heart of a Humanitarian Crisis." Quartz. October 03, 2017. <https://qz.com/1092313/a-brief-history-of-the-word-rohingya-at-the-heart-of-a-humanitarian-crisis/>.

⁸ Abdelkader, Engy. "The Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar: Past, Present, and Future." *Oregon Review of International Law* 15, no. 3 (2013): 393. <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/17966>.

⁹ "The Rohingya." Religious Literacy Project. Harvard Divinity School. <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/rohingya>.

¹⁰ Abdelkader, Engy. "The Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar: Past, Present, and Future." *Oregon Review of International Law* 15, no. 3 (2013): 394. <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/17966>.

¹¹ Abdelkader, Engy, and Rutgers University. "The History of the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya." The conversation. September 19, 2018. <http://theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040>.

¹² Hunt, Katie. "Rohingya Crisis: How We Got Here." CNN. November 13, 2017. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/12/asia/rohingya-crisis-timeline/index.html>.

destruction of Rohingya villages by fire. This triggered a massive exodus of more than 671,000 Rohingya Muslims to Bangladesh since August 2017¹³.

Satellite images show destroyed Rohingya village



Figure 2 ¹⁴

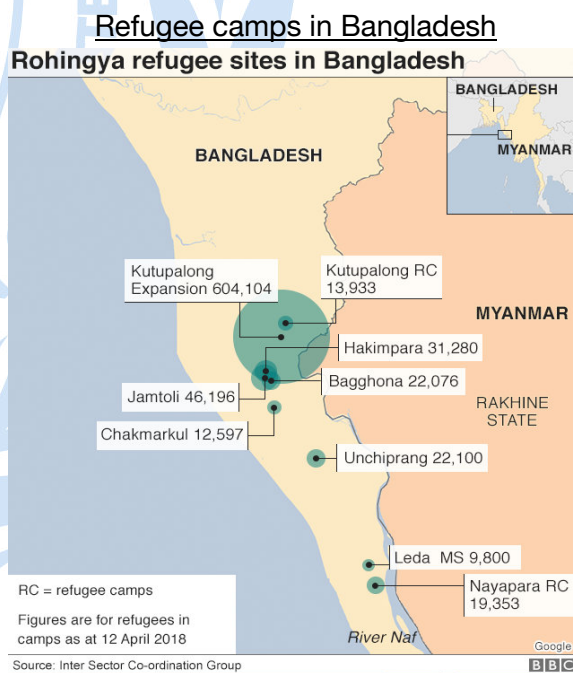


Figure 3 ¹⁵

¹³ "Rohingya Crisis." Human Rights Watch. Accessed November 09, 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>.

¹⁴ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

¹⁵ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

Due to the massive exodus, large populations of Rohingya refugees have fled into Bangladesh, with majority of the population residing in the area of Kutupalong.¹⁶ However, due to limited space, Rohingya refugees live in extremely poor conditions, with limited access to basic necessities and service. One of the largest problems faced by Bangladeshi government is the overpopulation of refugees, since most refugee families are large in size, including 5-20 members on average. In response to the problem of overpopulation, Bangladeshi government officials are planning to introduce voluntary sterilization to Rohingya refugee women, as well as other forms of birth control, such as condoms and birth control pills.¹⁷

SOCIAL, POLITICAL & ECONOMIC EFFECTS

This section seeks to show briefly the current social, political and economic effects of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The stateless minority, Rohingya people, have been increasingly migrating from their homeland, Rakhine State (also known as Burma) in Myanmar, and into to the city of Cox's Bazar, in the district of Chittagong, Bangladesh. An estimation conveys that one million of the Indo-Aryan language speaking clan had resided in Myanmar from 2016 to 2017,¹⁸ before raising the international phenomenon charging the Burmese military of ethnic genocide. Overpopulation of the refugees in Bangladesh has risen vast social, political and economic issues.

Social:

The estimated overpopulation by United Nations of almost one-million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh is causing a social phenomenon.¹⁹ The substantial number of refugees in under one year has led camps to be overcrowded and in cramped situations. Social strains are also shifting demographics of the host nation (Bangladesh) as Rohingya refugees have begun to outnumber domestic persons in ratio of 2:1 according to United Nations statistics. The refugees are forced to find shelter in spontaneous arrangements due to overcrowded states of formal host camps. Kutupalong refugee camp, located in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, inhabits a significant number of Rohingya refugees who have fled their homes in Myanmar due to persecution. Kutupalong is now internationally known to be the

¹⁶ "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

¹⁷ "Mixed Views on Bangladeshi Sterilization Plan for Rohingya." International La-croix. November 1, 2017. <https://international.la-croix.com/news/mixed-views-on-bangladeshi-sterilization-plan-for-rohingya/6247#>.

¹⁸ Alam, M. (2018, February 12). How the Rohingya crisis is affecting Bangladesh - and why it matters . Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/12/how-the-rohingya-crisis-is-affecting-bangladesh-and-why-it-matters/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3c1a1c3cd8cf

¹⁹ Ibid.

largest refugee settlement. In addition to overpopulation of camps, due to poor social conditions, host authorities seek to prevent the Rohingya people from integrating with the Bangladeshi community. In order to pre-empt the refugees from citizenship (through birth or marriage), Bengali language is absent in camps' education offered to the Rohingya people. Due to higher birth rate of the Rohingya, contrasting to Bangladeshi locals, sterilization of women is a social issue which takes place. According to an article in the Washington Post,²⁰ Rohingya people face harsher risks of death, deriving from malnutrition, and disease, including diphtheria, which without immunization, may disseminate beyond host camps. Furthermore, social conditions of Bangladesh's camps put Rohingya refugees into higher risks of falling into trafficking situations, such as sex, labour, or drugs.

Political:

The Rohingya crisis had begun in August 2017 with mass violence, a political movement by the Burmese military against the Rohingya community. As the closest neighboring state, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina and Bangladeshi authorities were opposed to open borders, however had to swiftly do so due to international pressures. Unfortunately, the host nation has been incapable to systemize required structure of diplomatic support in order to mitigate the Rohingya crisis. Furthermore, with the Burmese military's strong alliances with China and India, the Bangladeshi government faces international controversy of a "bilateral arrangement" which urges repatriation of the Rohingya people. International organizations and refugees deny consultation of impractical proposed plan by Dhaka to complete the deal in the span of two years. This leads to the opposition by the Rohingya refugees and a number of security challenges. Major security challenges causing drastic political movements between the Bangladeshi and Myanmar borders are also derived from actions of ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army). The militant group had taken action against the Burmese military by attacking and triggering their security posts. ARSA's pledges further concerns the Bangladeshi authorities that establishment and recruitment from within Bangladesh's formal refugee camps will lead to cross-border war as fatal consequence.

Economic:

The economic situation of Bangladesh post-Rohingya crisis has been poor. Although the nation-state has received considerable aid from international humanitarian organizations for the Rohingya refugees, funds and aids do not cover the economic costs effected on the Bangladeshi government or citizens. The monetary measure (GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita) results to meager earnings of approximately \$1,400 USD.²¹ Although due to the Rohingya crisis, the state economy has increased 7.1 percent, advancing the nation toward

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Alam, M. (2018, February 12). How the Rohingya crisis is affecting Bangladesh - and why it matters . Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/12/how-the-rohingya-crisis-is-affecting-bangladesh-and-why-it-matters/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3c1a1c3cd8cf

United Nations' "Millennium Development Goals," economic substandard effects remain latent. To exemplify this notion, the main tourist attractions that contributed a vast amount to Bangladesh's economic income per capita, Cox's Bazar's coastal waterfronts, towns and resorts, is now destitute district inhabiting refugees and foreign aid workers. Former hoteliers and other seaside tourist destination workers have lost their jobs to the Rohingya refugees who adopt lower wages. Domestic Bangladeshi workers now are forced to work alongside humanitarian organizations, whilst price for basic goods and services continually increase.

CURRENT UN INVOLVEMENT AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

The UN has followed the status of human rights in Myanmar since 1992, when a Special Rapporteur was established on the subject.²² Whilst several different actors brought further reports and recommendations to the UN during the years following, no significant actions occurred until March 2017. This is when the Human Rights Council established the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. The Mission made several reports to the Council over the next year or so, but the official report was not released until September 2018. It found concrete evidence for human rights violations by Myanmar security forces in several states, and recommended that "the impetus for accountability must come from the international community," specifically asking that several senior military officials be prosecuted in an international tribunal for genocide, crimes against humanity, and other charges.²³ Many requests were demanded of Myanmar's government, beginning with acknowledgement of the crisis from de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Also during this time (specifically in July 2018), the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on the Security Council to bring Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.²⁴

Moving from UN legal actions to UN aid actions, several different organizations have worked with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency - re-invigorated aid efforts in its pre-established refugee camps in Bangladesh, such as the one at Cox's Bazar. They provided items for shelter, water, latrines, and more in units numbering from tens to hundreds of thousands.²⁵ The World Health Organization (WHO) launched an immunization campaign and the World Food Programme (WFP) reached over 350,000

²² "Human Rights Documents." Accessed November 8, 2018.

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/alldocs.aspx?doc_id=4080.

²³ "Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar" Accessed November 8, 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_CRP.2.pdf.

²⁴ "Zeid Calls for ICC Probe into Myanmar Rohingya Crisis." UN News, July 4, 2018. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013932>.

²⁵ Refugees, United Nations High Commissioner for. "100 Days of Horror and Hope: A Timeline of the Rohingya Crisis." UNHCR. Accessed November 8, 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/12/5a1c313a4/100-days-horror-hope-timeline-rohingya-crisis.html>.

Rohingya refugees with food aid as of September 2017.²⁶ In addition, the greater international community took and are taking steps to aid beyond the efforts of the UN. For instance, in October 2017, the international donor community pledged to donate \$344 million USD to deliver humanitarian assistance to refugee communities in Bangladesh.²⁷

The future of the Rohingya remains uncertain and, according to experts, dark. A repatriation plan for the Rohingya refugees, which was agreed on in December 2017 by the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, is currently being conducted. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, stated in early November 2018, as the repatriation began, that it was a grave mistake. She assessed that there is no evidence on Myanmar's part of guarantees for the Rohingya's safety, and as such they must not return to the Rakhine state.²⁸ There has been no concrete action of the Myanmar government to adhere to the terms of the aforementioned Fact-Finding Mission, either.



²⁶ "UN Scales up Response as Number of Rohingya Refugees Fleeing Myanmar Nears 500,000." UN News, September 22, 2017. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/566472-un-scales-response-number-rohingya-refugees-fleeing-myanmar-nears-500000>.

²⁷ "Donors Pledge over US\$344 Million in Response to Rohingya Refugee Crisis." UNHCR. Accessed November 8, 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/10/59ee1c494/donors-pledge-us344-million-response-rohingya-refugee-crisis.html>.

²⁸ "OHCHR | Myanmar: UN Expert Pleads for Rohingya Returns to Stop, Fears Repeat Abuses May Await." Accessed November 8, 2018. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23837&LangID=E>.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In light of criticism towards the UN for not acting soon enough, what could the UN have done earlier than March 2017 to prevent or better handle the Rohingya refugee crisis?
2. Who should be held accountable for the horrors the Rohingya faced and still face?
3. What action should and/or can be brought against the Myanmar military? How about the Myanmar government?
4. What can other actors, such as NGOs or other international organizations, do to help the current situation of the Rohingya?
5. Should the UN support the ongoing repatriation of Rohingya refugees? Why? If not, what should be done instead in regards to the refugee camps in Bangladesh?
6. Historically speaking, what was the main contributing factor to the development of the Rohingya Crisis?
7. To what extent did colonization perpetuate the political instability of Myanmar, resulting in internal ethnic conflict?
8. What measures can be taken by the international community in pursuance of decolonization?
9. What actions should be taken upon the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)?
10. What are precautionary guidelines that should be followed by governments to prevent future ethnic conflicts?



TOPIC B: BELIZE BORDER DISPUTE

In a dispute dating back to the Treaty of Tordesillas and the beginning of New World exploration, Guatemala currently claims a large portion of land administered by Belize. Guatemala has already held a referendum to defer the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and Belize will vote the same next year. Both nations defend their claims and are in hopes in coming to a final agreement.

In the meantime, the disputed territory has undergone a variety of social, economic, and political effects. Until a final consensus may be decided, decisions must be made over the current state of the land, and the which it is administered.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Colonial Era

Historically, both Belize and Guatemala were known to be inhabited by the Mayans. With a population of approximately 200,000, they populated southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and northern Honduras before the Spanish arrived. During most of the 16th and 17th century, the Spanish ruled over the Mayan communities while Mayan continued to resist²⁹. However, the Spaniards never settled in Belizean territory, either due to their fear of “the dense, forbidding jungles and unhealthy climate³⁰” or their failure to completely conquer the Mayans³¹. In 1763 and 1783, through the Treaty of Paris and the Treaty of Versailles respectively, the Spanish allowed the British to cut and export logwood, which allowed British settlements in Belizean territory³². The Spanish consistently launched attacks on British settlements the British settlers until The Battle of St. George’s Caye in 1798, marking the last attempt of the Spaniards’ eviction of British settlers³³. British settlers claimed sovereignty over Belize, which was then known as British Honduras as a result of victory in The Battle of St. George’s Caye³⁴.

²⁹ Shoman, Assad. *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*. Belize City, Belize: Angelus Press Limited, 1994. p. 5-6

³⁰ Setzekorn, William David. *Formerly British Honduras: A Profile of the New Nation of Belize*. Newark, Ohio: Dumbarton Pr., 1976. p.128

³¹ Perez, Arlenie, Chuang Chin-Ta, and Farok Afero. "Belize-Guatemala Territorial Dispute and Its Implications for Conservation." *Tropical Conservation Science* 2, no. 1 (March 23, 2009): 11-24. doi:10.1177/194008290900200104.

³² "Chapter 3. British Settlement." *Facts About Belize - Belize by Naturalight*. <http://www.belize.net.com/bzeguat/chap3.html#27>.

³³ Cubola Productions and Naturalight Productions. 2007. *The Spanish and the British in Belize*. Chapter 3. *A History of Belize Nation in the Making*. <http://www.belize.net.com/history/chap3.html>

³⁴ Perez, Arlenie, Chuang Chin-Ta, and Farok Afero. "Belize-Guatemala Territorial Dispute and Its Implications for Conservation." *Tropical Conservation Science* 2, no. 1 (March 23, 2009): 11-24. doi:10.1177/194008290900200104.

Independence of Guatemala

By 1824, Mexico had declared independence from Spain, affecting neighbouring countries, such as Guatemala, who declared independence from Spain in 1823, forming the United Provinces of Central America³⁵.

Conflicts between Guatemala and Belize

In 1839, after the United Provinces of Central America had disbanded, Guatemala claimed Belize as their territory, which was denied by the British. In 1840, Britain declared that British Honduras is under jurisdiction of British Laws and then officially declared Belize as British territory in 1862³⁶. In 1859, a treaty was signed between Britain and Guatemala, determining the boundaries currently between Belize and Guatemala. As a part of the treaty, Britain was obliged to build a cart road along the Atlantic Coast in order to promote trade for Guatemala, which was never built and no alternative agreements have been reached. In 1945, the new Guatemalan constitution declared sovereignty over Belize and threatened to invade Belize, happening again in 1975 and 1977³⁷.

Independence of Belize

The establishment of the *U.N. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* in 1960 allowed Britain to agree upon the independence of Belize³⁸. In 1963, Britain agreed to a new constitution for Belize, allowing it to become a self-governing state, and consequently, Guatemala cut off diplomatic ties with Britain until 1985. In 1973, the official name of Belize was changed from British Honduras in anticipation of independence. In 1975, a U.N. General Assembly resolution was rejected by Guatemala upon providing independence to Belize with its territory. Subsequently, Belize gained independence in 1981³⁹.

Negotiation between Guatemala and Belize

In the same year, Britain, Belize, and Guatemala signed an agreement named "Heads of Agreement". This agreement discussed mutual entity to free port facilities in Belize and Guatemala, a subsequent treaty on mutual security of both states, and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Britain and Guatemala, as well as receiving support from

³⁵ "Chapter 3. British Settlement." Facts About Belize - Belize by Naturalight.
<http://www.belize.net.com/bzeguat/chap3.html#27>.

³⁶ National Advisory Commission. "'Beginnings' in The Guatemalan Claim: Origins, Negotiations and Solutions." Belmopan, Belize: Ministry of Foreign Affairs., 2003. <http://www.belize-guatemala.gov.bz>

³⁷ Perez, Arlenie, Chuang Chin-Ta, and Farok Afero. "Belize-Guatemala Territorial Dispute and Its Implications for Conservation." *Tropical Conservation Science* 2, no. 1 (March 23, 2009): 11-24.
doi:10.1177/194008290900200104.

³⁸ United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, res. 1514 (XV), 15 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 66, U.N. Doc. A/4684 (1961).
<http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>

³⁹ "About Belize." Permanent Mission of Belize to the United Nations.
<http://www.belize-mission.com/about-belize/>.

Guatemala on Belize's membership in the U.N., and other international organizations⁴⁰. However, the terms were not finalized due to the dissatisfaction of Belizean citizens⁴¹. In 1985, a new Guatemalan constitution was passed, removing the clause that claimed Belize as Guatemalan territory⁴². In 1991, Belize and Guatemala established diplomatic relations in recognition of Belizean independence. In the same year, The Maritime Areas Act was passed by Belizean Congress, defining sea territory, Internal Waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone, also allowing Guatemala access to the high seas through its Internal Waters⁴³.

Recent Conflicts between Guatemala and Belize

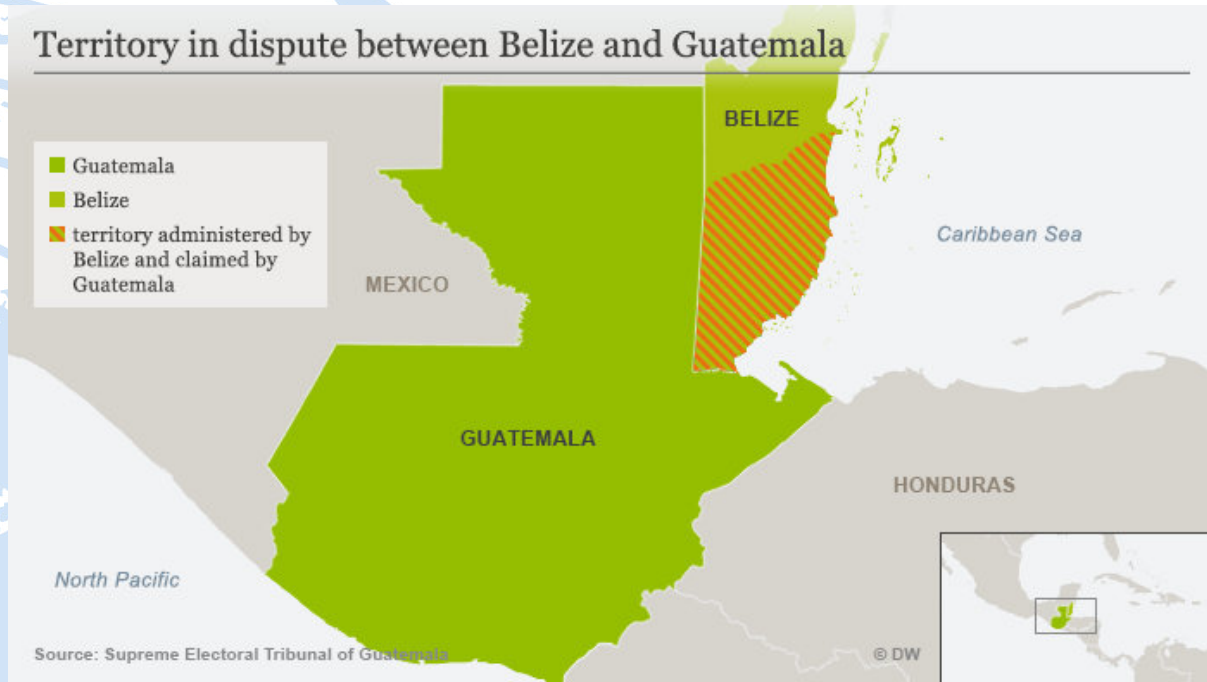


Figure 4 ⁴⁴

In 1999, the Guatemalan claim was restated⁴⁵ as a consequence of change in power in Guatemala following a military-led coup⁴⁶. and instead of following the 1859 treaty, the new

⁴⁰ National Advisory Commission. "‘Beginnings’ in The Guatemalan Claim: Origins, Negotiations and Solutions." Belmopan, Belize: Ministry of Foreign Affairs., 2003. <http://www.belize-guatemala.gov.bz>

⁴¹ "On The Independence and In-defiance of March 1981." Channel 7 News Belize Archive. March 31, 2005. <http://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=776>.

⁴² National Advisory Commission. "‘Beginnings’ in The Guatemalan Claim: Origins, Negotiations and Solutions." Belmopan, Belize: Ministry of Foreign Affairs., 2003. <http://www.belize-guatemala.gov.bz>

⁴³ Perez, Arlenie, Chuang Chin-Ta, and Farok Afero. "Belize-Guatemala Territorial Dispute and Its Implications for Conservation." *Tropical Conservation Science* 2, no. 1 (March 23, 2009): 11-24. doi:10.1177/194008290900200104.

⁴⁴ Burack, Cristina. "Guatemala Votes on Sending Belize Territory Dispute to International Court of Justice." DW.15.04.2018." DW. April 15, 2018. <https://p.dw.com/p/2w4X8>

⁴⁵ National Advisory Commission. "‘Beginnings’ in The Guatemalan Claim: Origins, Negotiations and Solutions." Belmopan, Belize: Ministry of Foreign Affairs., 2003. <http://www.belize-guatemala.gov.bz>

⁴⁶ "Chapter 12. Maritime Areas Bill." Facts About Belize - Belize by Naturalight. <http://www.belizenet.com/bzeguat/chap12.html>

claim declared approximately 53% of Belize as Guatemalan territory, including the current Cayo and Belize Districts⁴⁷, which is opposed strongly by Belizean citizens. Subsequently, Guatemalan military forces were placed at the internationally recognized border, and the Belize Defence Force was placed on the Belizean side of the border⁴⁸.

Recent updates

An agreement was signed by Guatemala and Belize on December 8, 2008, on holding referendums in both countries in order to refer this issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)⁴⁹. In effort of resolving this issue, The Guatemalan Referendum was held on April 10, 2018 with a 95% of voters supporting the action of filing the Guatemalan claim to ICJ⁵⁰. Subsequently, the Belizean government decided to hold its referendum on resolving the Guatemalan claim at the ICJ on April 10, 2019⁵¹.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL EFFECTS

The binational (Belizean-Guatemalan) territorial-border dispute had begun over two centuries ago and remains unresolved. The two neighboring nation-states, located in Central America face major conflict that stunts Belize's social, political and economic statuses and growth as Guatemala had claimed Belize's territory since 1821.

Social:

Due to the Belizean-Guatemalan territorial border dispute, Belize has evidently lacked international commercial relations along with connection of diplomatic channels and negotiations for a long time. Despite this, the small state (previously British Honduras, former colony of the United Kingdom) cultivates strong relations with Britain, Latin America and the United States. Through the lingering border conflict, Belize socially considers itself Central American and Caribbean. According to BBC News,⁵² Belize's social conditions inhabit poverty due to the Guatemala's claim of the state's territory, which has led to major problem of violence, drug and narcotic trafficking into the United States. Belize is now a blacklisted nation, considered as one of the major producers of illicit drugs. In addition to this, the binational

⁴⁷ Lauterpacht, Elihu, Sir, Stephen Schwebel, Judge, Shabtai Rosenne, and Francisco Orrego Vicuña. "Legal Opinion on Guatemala's Territorial Claim to Belize." *Legal Opinion on Guatemala's Territorial Claim to Belize*, November 2001. [http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/files/Legal Opinion 2002 English.pdf](http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/files/Legal%20Opinion%202002%20English.pdf).

⁴⁸ Phillips, Dion E. *The Military of Belize*. University of Western Indies. Retrieved from <http://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/bnccde/belize/conference/papers/phillips.html>

⁴⁹ "Belize & Guatemala Sign Special Agreement in Washington" Channel 7 News Belize. December 8, 2008. <http://7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=12813>

⁵⁰ Burack, Cristina. "Guatemala Votes on Sending Belize Territory Dispute to International Court of Justice." DW.15.04.2018." DW. April 15, 2018. <https://p.dw.com/p/2w4X8>

⁵¹ "Belize Sets April 10, 2019 for ICJ Referendum." The San Pedro Sun. May 04, 2018. <https://www.sanpedrosun.com/government/2018/05/04/belize-sets-april-10-2019-icj-referendum/>.

⁵² BBC News. (2018, May 16). Belize Country Profile. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18724590>

dispute has led to numerous social frustrations on land and sea of the small coastal nation, including illegal settlements, hunting, fishing, farming, property theft, and threats. Such social problems have only inflamed the conflict between Belize and Guatemala further.

Political:

According to the Economist,⁵³ the border dispute between Belize and Guatemala had only escalated further as the Guatemalan Congress proposed a controversial resolution restricting Guatemalan citizens' visitation to Belize. The resolution was proposed by Guatemalan congressman, Erick Lainfiesta, and was secured with the approval of minimum deputies. This agreement was put forth after the Belizean army had allegedly violated human rights acts leading to the deaths of nine Guatemalan citizens since 1999. Mario Taracena, head of the Guatemalan Congress, who opposed the agreement argued that the Guatemalan operation was political clumsiness that led to production of flawed patriotism. In addition to this, international critics along with Taracena accuse Jimmy Morales, Guatemalan president utilizing the issue of the binational border dispute in order to disregard internal domestic issues, such as crime and healthcare. Furthermore, a number of international organizations have attempted to resolve the Belizean-Guatemalan border dispute with political interventions but have failed in the past. The OAS (Organization of American States) had facilitated a proposal with a settlement finalized by the International Court of Justice. Past treaties, agreements and negotiations that had failed also include the Belize Maritime Act, implications to conserve, and more. The political situation between Belize and Guatemala remain pending for advancements and mitigation.

Economic:

The base of economic means that Belize heavily relies on its tourism industry. In 2016, when the Guatemalan Congress restricted Guatemalan citizens' visitation into Belize, whilst still possessing claim to massive part or whole of Belize's territory, the tourism industry declined. Furthermore, the small coastal state's attractions leading to major derivation of foreign currency include natural and historical sites, such as wildlife, barrier reefs, and the Mayan ruins. Unfortunately, the economy of Belize lacks strength due to the binational border crisis as the poverty-stricken economic conditions also affect neighboring nation states. Furthermore, Belize's government and citizens suffer from economic growth, as most means of productions such as fishing, harvesting, and farming are illegal in the coastal state. In 2005, the OAS (Organization of American States) aimed to resolve a part of the territorial dispute with a

⁵³ EIU Digital Solutions. "Belize." *Country, Industry and Risk Analysis from The Economist Intelligence Unit - List of Countries - The Economist Intelligence Unit*, country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1194215903&Country=Belize&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=Political%2Bstability&u=1&pid=1257250709&oid=1257250709&uid=1

series of negotiations. The framework consisted of settlements to maritime boundaries recognized as the regime: Law of Sea by the United Nations.⁵⁴

CURRENT UN INVOLVEMENT AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

While international involvement in the border dispute has been a factor since inception, specific UN involvement has been centered around the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is the UN's highest court. The notion of submitting the Belize/Guatemala territorial dispute to the ICJ was conceived in the late 2000s, with the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States recommending the action in late 2007 and both countries agreeing to hold a referendum on the matter in 2008.⁵⁵ In April 2018, Guatemalans overwhelmingly voted to pass the motion.⁵⁶ Belize has not yet held their referendum, but the government announced in May 2018 that the vote is scheduled for 10 April 2019.⁵⁷ While representatives of both countries have spoken at least briefly on the dispute in front of the General Assembly in the past decade, no UN body has addressed the formal dispute. Most recently, the Belizean Minister for Foreign Affairs noted efforts to end the Guatemalan claim before the General Assembly in September 2018, noting the UN's support of Belize's independence 37 years prior.⁵⁸

On the other hand, the global community has been very involved in other factors within the dispute, such as concerns with illegal logging along the border. NGOs work alongside local and national governments on the border to improve forest governance.⁵⁹ As the land on the border is also shared with indigenous peoples, international groups working in that field as well as in the environment have vested interests in the dispute.

While tensions at the border remain high, further action at the national and international level rests on the Belizean referendum. In the meantime, governments and NGOs continue to work on solving the illegal activities - logging, poaching, etc. - that have arisen in the disputed land.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "OAS Peace Fund." Accessed November 8, 2018.

<http://www.oas.org/sap/peacefund/belizeandguatemala/>.

⁵⁶ "Guatemala Votes to Ask U.N. Court to Resolve Belize Border Spat." *Reuters*, April 16, 2018.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-guatemala-referendum-border-belize-idUSKBN1HN0EN>.

⁵⁷ "Belize to Hold a Referendum on Guatemala Territorial Dispute - Durham University." Accessed November 8, 2018. https://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/news/boundary_news/?itemno=34541.

⁵⁸ "Belize." General Assembly of the United Nations, September 19, 2018.

<https://gadebate.un.org/en/73/belize>.

⁵⁹ "Guatemala and Belize: Transboundary Efforts to Reduce Illegal Logging | FAO-EU FLEGT Programme | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations." Accessed November 9, 2018.

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/from-the-field/stories-details/en/c/414069/>.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Should and/or can the UN interfere in the current state of the border dispute? Why or why not?
2. What would be the immediate political, economic, and social effects of a favorable result to the Belizean referendum, both in the international sphere and in the Guatemalan/Belizean? What if the referendum votes against the motion?
3. What can the global community do to stop illegal activities occurring along the Guatemala/Belize border, such as poaching?
4. Should Belize vote in favor of taking the issue to the ICJ, what do you believe would be the result of the court case? Why?
5. How does this dispute affect other countries besides Guatemala and Belize?
6. To what extent did British and Spanish colonization prolong this long-standing dispute? How does this provide an exemplar in solving border disputes between other countries in decolonization?
7. What is the predominant issue preventing the resolution of this long-standing border dispute, considering the historical background?
8. How has the *Maritime Areas Act* passed by Belizean government regarding its territorial claims with Guatemala structured regional efforts to resolve the disputes?
9. What are effective preventive guidelines that can be followed by the international community?
10. How has nationalism influenced the territorial claims made by Belize and Guatemala? How has nationalism influenced disputes in the past and what is a better approach?

ADVICE FOR RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Your research should be taken from a variety of different resources. Be sure to thoroughly read through the background guide in order to best understand the topic and know what is expected of you. Use the resources provided, but also be sure to do your own research on the topic—gather key pieces of information on the topics.

Be sure to analyze how the issue specifically affects your country, and what your country's stance on the issue is. Also research which nations share similar views, as this will be vital information when working with other delegations. Try to plan ahead of what countries will be best to work with on resolutions. Additionally, try to come up with possible solutions to the different topics.

Make note to also familiarize yourself with the parliamentary procedures and learn the different terminology. This will be useful for clarity and for making our committee run as smoothly as possible. Come prepared each day with a positive attitude and a willingness to work, and the committee will be a success.

Best of Luck!



TOPIC A KEY RESOURCES

Abdelkader, Engy. "The Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar: Past, Present, and Future." *Oregon Review of International Law* 15, no. 3 (2013): 393. <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/17966>.

Scholarly article reviewing the current developments of the Rohingya, providing a good in-depth analysis on the background. Suggests some potential solutions.

"Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know about the Crisis." BBC News. April 24, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

Article which gives a good synopsis of the events and current actions being taken.

<https://news.un.org/en/tags/rohingya-refugee-crisis>

A great website with multiple articles on the crisis. Focuses specifically on the UN positions and actions that have been taken, and are currently being taken.

"Rohingya Crisis." Human Rights Watch. Accessed November 09, 2018.

<https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>.

Examples and explanation of the crisis accompanied by resourceful videos.

TOPIC B KEY RESOURCES

<http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/dispute/faq>

Provides some background through a primary perspective on the referendum to be held in Belize.

"Belize & Guatemala Sign Special Agreement in Washington" Channel 7 News Belize. December 8, 2008. <http://7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=12813>

More info on the current agreement, though an older article. Gives good insight into the difference between past attempts and now.

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/belize-guatemala.htm>

More background on the history of the territory dispute and examples of more failed attempts to reach an agreement.

<http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>

The UN resolution that has led to much of the dispute.

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