

Sources for *Rohingya Crisis News* (<http://harris1.net/info/rohingya/>)

5/2/2018

A note about sources

(Based on the author's recollections):

***Rohingya Crisis News* was developed by an American, primarily for North Americans.**

It is simply a list of links (with some excerpts and supplemental information) to articles and documents by OTHER parties -- particularly major international organizations and major media. An effort has been made to provide a credible, diverse and fair array of major sources, and thorough coverage of the major Crisis events.

Erupting fully in August 2017, the current Rohingya Crisis initially got very little attention from American media -- they were preoccupied with America's own politics, hurricanes and the nation's anti-sexual-harrasment "Me Too" movement, particularly in the media industry, itself. (On occasion, Americans took serious interest in the threatening nuclear developments in North Korea -- but not much else in global affairs. American media reflected, or encouraged, that -- with the exception of covering the ongoing carnage in Syria.)

America, itself, too, as a nation, initially showed no interest in a crisis involving Southeast Asian Muslims. (The U.S. had turned its back on Southeast Asia ever since its retreat from the Vietnam War, and had just elected a president who promised "a ban on all Muslims entering the United States.").

The U.S. State Department had long provided some detailed analysis of the crisis in Myanmar (which it still refers to by the traditional name "Burma"), and as the crisis developed, it occasionally posted new information or commentary, including official statements (intially condemning all the violence by all parties, then gradually shifting to condemning the Myanmar government). However, lacking substantial public or Presidential interest in the issue, the U.S. government was not a major factor in events.

Consequently, NON-American sources were the most important suppliers of information on what quickly became the world's leading humanitarian crisis.

Chief among these were the major media from
Britain, India, Bangladesh, Australia, Singapore
-- in roughly that order of significance, at first.

Other nations' media provided some English-language information, as time went by, and the Crisis gathered international attention -- though many focused only on the aspects of the Crisis that involved their own `nation, and its response to the Crisis.

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, also, very importantly, provided much of the most revealing and important information.

These organizations included (in approximate order of importance):

- The **United Nations (U.N.)**, particularly these offices:
 - **UNHCHR** (U.N. High Commissioner for **Human Rights**), and the **OHCHR** (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights)
 - **UNHCR** (U.N. High Commissioner for **Refugees**), and the **OHCR** (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees)
 - **UN SC** (U.N. **Security Council**)
- **Human Rights Watch (HRW)**
- **Amnesty International (AI)**
- **Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF)**, (better known in US as "**Doctors Without Borders**")

Two other **special organizations** were cited, also

- **Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)**
(America's leading "think tank" on international affairs, a non-partisan council of current and former American leaders -- political and business -- and prominent international-affairs experts)
- **The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State**
(The "**Annan Commission**" -- a Myanmar national advisory commission, mostly of Myanmar representatives -- headed by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan -- convened before the current crisis by Myanmar's civilian government to "*examine the complex challenges facing [Myanmar's] Rakhine State and to propose answers to those challenges.*" Their "*Final Report*" is linked to from *Rohingya Crisis News*. The current crisis erupted within hours of its release.)

IN MAJOR MEDIA...

After Britain's publications (noted below) the greatest credibility and informative coverage came, initially, from **the world's four leading news-reporting networks**, who supply much of the international reporting for the world's leading newspapers and news broadcasters:

- - Associated Press (AP);
- - Reuters;
- - Agence France-Presse (AFP); and
- - British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC)...

...in that order of importance (although the credibility of the BBC generally ranked higher, it was less informative than the others).

Eventually it became apparent that the order of usefulness of coverage of the Rohingya Crisis re-arranged into this order:

- - **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** (the richest and most timely reporting);
- - **Reuters** (the overall highest-value, highest-quality coverage);
- - **British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC)** (properly fact-checked, though a bit distant and sluggish);
- - **Associated Press (AP)** (usually a Johnny-come-lately, often under-reporting

important matters, but generally very reliable on what it did publish)...

...though Britain's "***The Guardian***" remained the overall most ready and extensive source, but gradually drifted to a pro-Rohingya bias in topics and style of coverage.

GREAT BRITAIN / UNITED KINGDOM (U.K.):

The greatest credibility and informative coverage came, initially, from Britain's two leading online newspapers:

- - **The Guardian** (formerly the Manchester Guardian) and
- - **The Independent**,

-- and from

- - **The Economist** (the global British news magazine)

In the various former British colonies in the conflict region, several major newspapers and broadcasters provided substantial and essential coverage, in English -- mostly reflecting the high-quality legacy of British publishing standards and press freedom.

Among these (roughly in order of volume and quality of coverage) are:

- - The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)
- - Channel NewsAsia (Singapore)
- - Australian Broadcasting Corp. (ABC)
- - The Dhaka Tribune (Bangladesh)
- - The Daily Star (Bangladesh)
- - The Economic Times (India)
- - The Times of India (India)
- - The Hindustan Times (India)
- - The Hindu (India)
- - The Straits Times (Singapore)

UNITED STATES:

After the initial catastrophic events, the "Johnny-come-lately" American press -- halfway around the world from Myanmar -- and quite literally asleep as events unfolded there -- did, finally, begin to give substantial coverage of the Rohingya Crisis... though with a fraction of the attention shown by the rest of the world.

And **what information WAS published by U.S. sources relied almost wholly on the reporting of others** -- particularly the **Associated Press** and **Reuters**. In many cases, the American media's coverage of a key event was a very watered-down, abbreviated version of the more informative articles published elsewhere -- again reflecting a disturbing lack of interest, focus and knowledge about the subject (though the

argument is likely made by U.S. media that they were less likely to publish unverified information).

In fact, **FOREIGN media often did better at reporting United Nations activity, and U.N. statements**, on the Rohingya Crisis, than the media in the U.N.'s host country (the USA) -- including the *New York Times* in the U.N.'s host city.

American media *HAVE* produced some useful articles, and sometimes added insights, but their early work on the Crisis often showed indifference or incompetence, and still lags the coverage elsewhere.

American news media cited here include:

(L=Liberal; M=Moderate, C=Conservative;

by my subjective assessment, but matching many other observers' assessments, across the political spectrum)

- The New York Times (L)
- The Washington Post (L)
- The Chicago Tribune (C)
- The Los Angeles Times (C)
- The Wall Street Journal (C)
- TIME Magazine (M)
- Newsweek (L)
- U.S. News (C)

- CBS News (M/L)
- ABC News (L)
- NBC News (M/L)
- CNN - Cable News Network (M/L)
- Fox News (C) *

* (Fox publishes mostly *abbreviated* versions of AP articles that are also run, more completely, by ABC and others; consequently Fox is usually cited as a secondary source.)

However, most of these publications' articles on the Rohingya crisis are derived (or simply copied intact) from reporting by the AP or Reuters.

CANADA:

Canadian media provided some coverage, particularly of their own nation's involvement.

However, to Canada's national disgrace, the Canadian national who had served as the

United Nations envoy to Burma/Myanmar, until the current crisis erupted, was later expelled from that post when it was realized she had deliberately suppressed and concealed critical information that could have warned of the developing crisis.

After her replacement by the U.N., Canadian officials took a much stronger interest in the crisis -- including meetings with Burmese leaders -- and Canadian media (notably the **CBC**, **CTV**, and **Toronto Globe & Mail**) reported on their actions closely.

AUSTRALIA:

Australian media, too, was a bit sluggish to respond at first -- owing, perhaps, to its decades-long battle to keep Rohingya (and other Asian refugees) out of Australia, and owing to its politically sensitive current flap over Australia's refugee-internment camp on the island of Papua New Guinea.

However, **as the closest Anglo-ethnic nation to the crisis, Australia's media were the most credible, initially**, on the topic.

Australia's initial leader in coverage of the Rohingya crisis was the

- - **Sydney Morning Herald**
(particularly in articles by Lindsay Murdoch, presumably related to Australia's media tycoon Rupert Murdoch).
- - **The Australian Broadcasting Corp.** ("ABC" -- not to be confused with the *American* Broadcasting Corp (also "ABC"), in the U.S.), provided substantial coverage, as well.

Eventually, other Australian media began to take note -- particularly:

- - Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) -- Australia's public broadcaster;
- - News.com.au (Web news site);
- - The Australian.

SOUTH ASIA:

Bangladesh:

The second-most-important country to the Crisis, it is the poor, grossly overpopulated small Muslim nation next to Myanmar, and is **the nation to where the Rohingya have fled** (or more precisely, where they have been driven by) the Burmese military and their Rakhine surrogates.

Principal Bangladeshi sources include:

- **The Dhaka Tribune**

- (Initially, the most prolific credible Bangladeshi source)
- **The Daily Star**
(by 2018, the most prolific credible Bangladeshi source)

Many other Bangladeshi sources exist, though they've been little-noted.

India:

While all major Indian newspapers covered the topic, to some degree, they nevertheless seemed to reflect a **strong nationalistic Hindu (vs. Muslim) bias** -- at least during the early stages of the crisis.

And -- while over 600,000 Rohingya began fleeing for their lives from the current crisis -- **India's media mainly obsessed over the long legal wrangle about India attempting to evict 40,000 Rohingya refugees** who had already fled to India from previous years' atrocities in Myanmar.

The Economic Times (affiliated with the *Times of India*) was India's best source on the crisis, initially.

Later coverage in other Indian media gradually became more realistic as the new horrors in Myanmar became glaringly obvious, and the stunning exodus of refugees became unavoidable news.

I've begun to put some stock in the reporting of:

- - NDTV (New Delhi TV)
- - The Times of India (parent of the "Economic Times")
- - The Hindu
- - The Hindustan Times

Initially I also gave some credence to the

- - The Indian Express
- ...but have come to severely doubt its professional standards.

OTHER NATIONS:

Other media cited included these:

SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Note that it is important to understanding the behavior and attitudes of all of Southeast Asia -- **Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Philippines** -- are largely shaped by their desire to get along with (or be corrupted by) the world's largest nation, hovering over them: **China**.

None of Southeast Asia's nations are fully democratic, and some are outright authoritarian Communist states -- and their leaders prefer alliances with like-minded China, over alliances with the puritanical liberal democracies of the West.

What support HAS existed for Southeast Asian relations with the West have been largely undermined, recently, by President Trump's "every country for itself" doctrine, and by America's decision to pull out of the one alliance that promised to hold China at bay: the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership -- almost the last form of political leverage the U.S. had left with Southeast Asia).

Southeast Asian media have grown more and more interested in the Crisis, and key nations and sources have included:

Burma/Myanmar:

The nation where the crisis originates is ruled by a military dictator -- while providing some semblance of democratic election of the administrative and domestic support functions of government, overseen by the figurehead civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has shown no sympathy for the Rohingya.

Backed by the religious bias of a nation that is over 90% Buddhist, and increasingly intolerant of Muslims, that fragile "democracy" brings no relief to the Rohingya.

Media is still very subject to criminal prosecution by the military, which also controls the police -- making honest reporting on the Crisis very risky for Burmese media.

- The Irawaddy,

Myanmar's leading English-language newspaper, does not seem to reflect the popular-and-official line on the Crisis, but rather retains a remarkably objective and attentive (if under-stated) approach, in those few articles it publishes on the subject.

Singapore:

One of the world's major shipping ports and commercial centers, this tiny multi-ethnic nation -- at the tip of the peninsula that Myanmar shares with Thailand and Malaysia, across the Straits of Malacca from Indonesia (the world's most-populous Muslim nation) -- **is the business and information hub of Southeast Asia.** In the interest of good business, this rich-but-dictatorial former British colony exudes professionalism, and discourages regional conflicts. Its two main media have been among the best sources on the Rohingya crisis, though often relying on news service reporting.

- Channel NewsAsia

(which gradually begin shifting from a total reliance on **AFP** and **Reuters** reporters to developing its own reporters on the scene of the Crisis; it is, as of April 2018, one of the world's most timely, informative, professional and disciplined news outlets on the subject of the Rohingya Crisis).

- Straits Times

(traditionally the most globally trusted and popular regional news reference on Southeast Asia)

Thailand:

(Thailand is **next-door to the crisis**, and one of the principal countries to which Rohingya have fled over the years),

- **Bangkok Post** -- often "first to know" or "first to report" because of its exceptional proximity to the action.

Philippines:

- Philippine Star

...which reported on Philippine officials' inactions -- particularly important because the Philippine foreign minister was serving as the head of **ASEAN** (the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations), at the time of the crisis.

It is worth noting, too, that the Philippines are ruled by a popular, belligerent President (Dutarte), and the Philippines had long been, for over a century, combating Muslim insurgents in the southern half of the country -- feeding **an anti-Muslim bias in the majority-Christian nation**.

EAST ASIA:

Japan:

Japan has long sought good relations with Burma/Myanmar -- apparently driven in part by Japan's hope to exploit Myanmar's natural wealth, and harvest some of its rice production. **Japan HAD been attempting (with some apparent success) to serve as a peacemaker in Myanmar**, mainly with other ethnic conflicts, over the last few years -- **until elbowed aside in the current crisis by China**.

Some substantial English-language coverage of the issue (largely from the news services, and particularly on Japanese involvement in the Crisis) has appeared in these major sources:

- - Japan Times

- - NHK

China:

China is -- after Myanmar, itself -- the principal power in the region, and the principal driving force in the Rohingya crisis.

China has expansionist desires, expressed in its "One Belt, One Road" vision, and rather obviously eyes Burma/Myanmar as its developing ally next door, and as Western China's future port on the Indian Ocean (being built in a Rohingya area).

The closest seacoast to Western China (without going through hostile India) is Myanmar's Rakhine State -- particularly the Maungdaw Township, mostly populated by the majority of Rohingya, until the recent ethnic cleansing campaign drove them out.

This leaves the area largely free for the Myanmar government to confiscate Rohingya land (as they have indicated they will do), and turn it over to Chinese-partnered "development" (most likely announced shipping port and unannounced naval port developments), giving China a radically expanded access to the sea, and **China's first port on the Indian Ocean**. It also gives China greatly expanded access to the region's vast supplies of **the food most important to China: rice** (Myanmar is the world's foremost exporter of rice).

China has, accordingly, fought to keep the Rohingya purge going -- using its veto power to defend Myanmar from forceful U.N. Security Council intervention in the crisis.

When it became obvious that the global pressure was building for a return of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, from Bangladesh, **China promptly inserted itself as the negotiator between Bangladesh and Myanmar -- and (along with Myanmar) attempted to keep the rest of the world away from the "bilateral" (two-party) negotiations.**

As the crisis began drawing global condemnation, with threats of prosecution of the offending leaders, **Myanmar's de-facto ruler -- the military's commander-in-chief Sr. Gen. Aung Hlaing -- went to China to visit with Chinese premier Xi Jinping, to tighten their alliance.**

Attempts to get the U.N. Security Council to act forcefully on the Crisis have been thwarted, predictably, by China, who (along with the other 4 original nuclear-armed nations: the U.S., Russia, U.K. and France) **has a veto over any decisions of the Council.**

The

- **SCMP (South China Morning Post)** has been cited in *Rohingya Crisis News*, but -- being from a Communist nation -- should be regarded with skepticism, except as an expression of official Chinese positions.

MIDDLE EAST:

Middle Eastern media have generally been avoided in coverage of this issue. Most are from Muslim nations with a poor history of freedom-of-the-press (or none), and little honest journalism. **Commonly very biased in coverage of international conflict, most Middle Eastern media will reflexively (and often passionately) side with Muslims over any opponents.**

The rest are Israeli, commonly reflecting an *anti-Muslim* bias.

These two extremes of bias are disqualifying for coverage of a major geopolitical and humanitarian event that is largely driven and/or defined by religion, mainly involving Muslims and Buddhists.

In the few instances when I have used any Middle Eastern media, it has principally been when...

- they have published **an article contrary to their traditional bias** (e.g.: an Israeli or Jewish source sympathetically comparing Rohingya Muslims to Jews in the Holocaust),
- when they are **dispassionately reporting on their own nation's (or community's) involvement** with the Crisis, or
- when they are simply used as a **secondary source**.

Al Jazeera

It is particularly important to make note of the Middle-East / Muslim-world superstar media outlet -- Al Jazeera -- which is perhaps the source most frequently cited on the internet by first-page Google search returns on the subject of the Rohingya Crisis.

While often rich with informative Rohingya coverage, Al Jazeera has a well-documented history of pro-Muslim bias -- sometimes stunningly blatant -- in its coverage of international conflicts.

Because of the overwhelming volume and conspicuousness of Al Jazeera's coverage of the Rohingya Crisis, it's important to lay out the case for specifically excluding it in my coverage.

My notes, with sources, on this issue completes this article:

I avoided most references to the (abundance of) Al Jazeera articles on the Rohingya crisis, on the assumption of a severe pro-Rohingya (pro-Muslim) bias and agenda, given the company's rich history of pronounced pro-Muslim bias in covering international conflicts.

While there is certainly room to debate the extent of that bias and agenda, and to argue that Al Jazeera provides a fresh perspective, and important new information, on such issues -- its journalistic sobriety, on inflammatory issues affecting Muslims and Muslim countries (when in conflict with non-Muslims and non-Muslim countries) has been repeatedly questioned by relatively reputable sources, and found severely lacking.

Commentary on the *Al Jazeera* bias issue, from websites of relatively liberal academic institutions:

The notably broad-minded **Harvard Divinity School**, on its "**Religious Literacy Project**" website's page about *Al Jazeera*...

<https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/al-jazeera>

...notes:

"The United States has had a complicated relationship with Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera's coverage of the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq was decidedly negative... Negative coverage of American foreign policy has been immensely politically useful for Qatar, serving as the most important counterbalance in the country's close political and military relationship with America."

At **University of California at Santa Barbara**:

"The Crisis of Contemporary Arab Television:

"Has the Move towards Transnationalism and Privatization in Arab Television Affected Democratization and Social Development in the Arab World?"

by Ouidyane Elouardaoui

http://www.global.ucsb.edu/gsj/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.gisp.d7_gs-2/files/sitefiles/Elouardaoui.pdf

...which -- while lauding "the role Aljazeera and other private satellite channels played in fostering diversity of opinions and adapting more transparent coverage of sensitive regional issues" -- also obliquely notes:

"...Aljazeera's reinforcement of the shared Arab-Islamic identity..."

...and adds....

"As to the assertion that Aljazeera represents an exceptional case in the Arab mediascape in its approach and structure (being independent of the Ministry of Information), Aljazeera, in fact, lacked a religiously impartial editorial line. The Palestinian-born Aljazeera manager, Wadah Khanfar, who was the managing director of Aljazeera for several years, had employed hardline Islamist journalists, which made the channel foster radical forms of Islam in addition to a biased treatment of violent events taking place in the Arab world."

At **New York University**...

"Al-jazeera TV: An Example of Agenda Media"

Alan Attoof

in *PressEthic*

September 12, 2005

<https://journalism.nyu.edu/publishing/archives/pressethic/node/26>

...reviewing a widely cited documentary about Al Jazeera, "*Control Room*":

"Recently, I watched a documentary titled *Control Room*, directed by Jehane Noujaim. It is about *Al-jazeera TV's* coverage and exposure of the American-led war on Iraq, [starting] weeks before the war starts [and continuing] until the regime falls.

"The documentary, which is an excellent piece of work, confers with Al-jazeera's staff working in their control room before and during the war. It gives an affluent account of Al-Jazeera staff's personal reaction towards the war on Iraq, in conjunction with other angles of the war's media coverage.

* * *

"The documentary introduced me to Al-jazeera's staff, their mentality and even their behavior. ... In their news stories, they only include the aspects that meet the channel's agenda. For example, Al-jazeera has never reported the atrocities and human rights violations practiced by most of the Arab regimes. However, on the contrary, it covers the Isreal-Palstine conflict and violence in Iraq very well legitimizing suicide bombings in Israel and Iraq and they call it "resistance", no matter how many civilians are killed.

* * *

"In another scene of the documentary, none of their staff believed that Saddam Hussein and his regime were overthrown when the American soldiers entered Baghdad. Moreover, even one of the Channel's senior producers said that those Iraqis who celebrated Saddam's ouster are not Iraqis. As a person, you can express with your opinion to be against the American led war, but you cannot deny the fall of Saddam as journalist. True media personnel should tell the news the way it is.

Al Jazeera's bias is touched on, very lightly, by this analysis from **U. of Chicago and Harvard** academics, as posted on the **Brown University** website:

"Media, Education and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World"

Matthew A. Gentzkow and Jesse M. Shapiro

Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 18, Number 3—Summer 2004

<https://www.brown.edu/Research/Shapiro/pdfs/antiamer.pdf>

NOTE:

These comments were selected from websites of relatively liberal academic institutions -- the American entities most receptive to Al Jazeera. The evaluations of Al Jazeera in nearly all other U.S. (and many foreign) sources is almost universally suspicious of its pro-Arab and pro-Muslim bias and agenda, often stating that as a given.

Even in the very liberal "*The Atlantic*" magazine, editorialist Robert D. Kaplan's essay "Why I Love Al Jazeera"

October 2009

The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/10/why-i-love-al-jazeera/307665/>

...concedes:

"Of course, Al Jazeera has some overt prejudices. In covering the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, for example, it is clearly on the Palestinian side. Tear-jerking features about the sufferings of the Palestinians are not matched with equal coverage of the Israeli human terrain.

"What you get from Al Jazeera is the developing-world point of view, or, more specifically, that of the emerging developing world bourgeoisie; and that outlook is inherently pro-Palestinian, as well as deeply hostile to American military power. ...

"Overlying Al Jazeera's pro-Palestinian and anti-Bush sentiment is a breezy, pacifist-trending internationalism. In too many of its reports, the subliminal message appears to be that compromise should be the order of the day.

"According to Al Jazeera, the politically weak, merely by being so, are automatically in the right.

"A certain kind of moral equivalency is Al Jazeera's lifeblood. The history of human suffering seemingly begins and ends with that of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation and that of the Iraqis under erstwhile American occupation."

and FINALLY...

The role of bias in the editing of Al Jazeera was implicitly conceded by the network's OWN managing director, last year, at a university forum in Qatar:

"One NU-Q journalism student asked Trendle about his thoughts on how to

pitch a local story to an international news outlet and how to make the stories more relevant to global audiences.

"Trendle advised that in proposing the story, the journalist should be conscious of the fact that **a news outlet has a commercial and political agenda**. He said that this is crucial to understanding what would be of interest to the editors or news producers."

(The article notes: "*Al Jazeera is one of the university's key partners in Doha,... Several NU-Q alumni also work at Al Jazeera Media Network entities.*")

see:

"Al Jazeera English Acting Managing Director speaks at NU-Q"

February 25, 2017

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) official website

<http://www.qatar.northwestern.edu/news/articles/2017/02-AJE-MD.html>

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Richard Harris is a former journalist, public broadcaster, college instructor and award-winning international affairs scholar. He has no personal, ethnic, religious, political or business ties, nor any other connections, to the Rohingya Crisis. He provides this information as a voluntary public service.

http://harris1.net/civic/harris_civic.htm