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ASEAN'S HUMAN SECURITY RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS: NORMATIVE CONSTRAINTS AND REGIONAL LIMITATIONS

Devina Lintang Pratiwi
Program Studi Hubungan Internasional
Unversitas Brawijaya
Malang, Indonesia
devinaaalintangg@gmail.com

Wishnu Mahendra Wiswayana
Program Studi Hubungan Internasional
Unversitas Brawijaya
Malang, Indonesia
wishnu.mahendra@ub.ac.id

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Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti respons ASEAN terhadap krisis Rohingya dan tantangan keamanan manusia yang dihadapi oleh Rohingya di tengah keterbatasan respons regional ASEAN. Dengan menggunakan perspektif organisasi internasional dan teori keamanan manusia, bersama dengan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dan studi dokumen serta literatur, temuan menunjukkan bahwa respons ASEAN tetap dibatasi oleh Cara ASEAN, khususnya prinsip non-intervensi. Sebagai aktor, ASEAN belum mampu merumuskan respons kolektif yang jelas; sebagai arena, ASEAN menyediakan ruang untuk dialog tanpa tindakan kolektif yang efektif; dan sebagai instrumen, responsnya sebagian besar terbatas pada bantuan kemanusiaan. Akibatnya, ancaman terhadap keamanan pribadi, komunitas, dan politik Rohingya tetap ada. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa komitmen normatif ASEAN membatasi kapasitasnya untuk mengatasi akar penyebab krisis dan memberikan perlindungan keamanan manusia yang komprehensif.

Abstract

This study aims to examine ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis and the human security challenges faced by the Rohingya amidst the limitations of ASEAN's regional response. Using the perspectives of international organization and human security theory, along with qualitative descriptive research methods and document and literature studies, the findings indicate that ASEAN's response remains constrained by the ASEAN Way, particularly the principle of non-intervention. As an actor, ASEAN has not been able to formulate a clear collective response; as an arena, ASEAN provides space for dialogue without effective collective action; and as an instrument, its response has been largely limited to humanitarian assistance. Consequently, threats to the personal, community, and political security of the Rohingya persist. The study concludes that ASEAN's normative commitments limit its capacity to address the root causes of the crisis and provide comprehensive human security protection.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya crisis has emerged as a significant humanitarian issue in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. Since the escalation of violence in 2017, more than one million Rohingya people have fled Myanmar due to systematic violence, the deprivation of citizenship, and restrictions on basic rights (Bhattacharjee, 2024). In 2023, the situation further deteriorated as internal conflicts in Myanmar reignited (Asia Displacement Solutions Platform, 2023). This escalating crisis can no longer be regarded solely as a domestic issue; it has evolved into a regional challenge that necessitates a collective response from ASEAN. The lack of a substantial response from ASEAN raises questions about the effectiveness of its principle of non-interference in addressing increasingly acute cross-border humanitarian crises.

ASEAN faces a significant dilemma, as the Rohingya crisis poses a serious threat to human security, particularly concerning the personal, community, and political safety of the refugees. Reports indicate a heightened risk of death at sea, exploitation by smuggling networks, and rejection by local communities upon their arrival in ASEAN countries. In Indonesia and Malaysia (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023), refugees encounter limited access to education, health services, and a lack of clear legal status, largely due to the absence of a comprehensive national protection framework (Asia Displacement Solutions Platform, 2023).

Despite these challenges, ASEAN remains bound by the principle of non-interference, which is a fundamental aspect of the "ASEAN Way." Several studies suggest that ASEAN's strict adherence to this principle has significantly hampered its ability to address systematic human rights violations in the context of the Rohingya crisis (Spastyono et al., 2024), This has led to a shift in normative expectations toward the application of international human rights law as an alternative framework beyond ASEAN mechanisms (Oktavian et al., 2023). The principle emphasizes respect for the sovereignty of member states and discourages involvement in the

internal affairs of other countries (Bhattacharjee, 2024). Consequently, ASEAN tends to adopt a cautious, minimalistic approach when responding to the Rohingya crisis. Initiatives such as the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) by the AHA Center have resulted in short-term technical humanitarian responses that fail to address the fundamental political discrimination prompting the Rohingya exodus (Asia Displacement Solutions Platform, 2023). This creates a disconnect between the urgency of the humanitarian situation and ASEAN's normative capacity to act.

Several studies have examined ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis. Existing literature indicates that the persistence of the non-interference principle is closely linked to domestic political dynamics within member states, particularly the enduring influence of military actors, which reinforces ASEAN's preference for sovereignty and resistance to external intervention (Sulaiman, 2024). However, most analyses tend to focus on the political dynamics within Myanmar, the limitations of internal consensus within ASEAN, or issues with international coordination. Research explicitly connecting ASEAN's passivity, the principle of non-interference, and their implications for human security—especially regarding the personal, community, and political safety of refugees—remains limited. Consequently, insufficient attention has been given to how ASEAN's normative constraints, particularly the ASEAN Way, affect the effectiveness of regional instruments and collective responses. This creates an analytical gap that this study aims to address from a human security perspective (Tanaya & Winarko, 2025). Moreover, there has been little research examining how these normative barriers contribute to the ongoing vulnerability of the Rohingya in the ASEAN countries that receive refugees. This gap emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive analysis of how regional structures and norms shape ASEAN's response to cross-border humanitarian crises.

This study aims to examine ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis through the perspectives of international organization theory and human security. Specifically, it investigates how ASEAN's

role is enacted through the dimensions of actor, arena, and instrument as proposed by Clive Archer, and examines the human security challenges faced by the Rohingya amid the limitations of ASEAN's regional response.

Using the human security framework, the analysis focuses on threats to personal, political, and community security experienced by the Rohingya, both in Myanmar and in ASEAN member states that function as transit and destination countries. In addition, this study examines how the principle of non-interference has shaped ASEAN's response to the crisis and framed its approach toward regional humanitarian challenges.

Thus, this study contributes to the literature by providing an integrated analysis of ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis through the perspectives of international organization theory and human security, highlighting both ASEAN's regional role and the multidimensional security challenges faced by the Rohingya.

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

This study employs two main analytical frameworks: Human Security theory and International Organization theory, to analyze the limitations of ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis. Utilizing these two frameworks aims to capture the complexities surrounding the Rohingya issue, which encompasses not only the threats faced by individuals and communities but also the role, capacity, and limitations of ASEAN as a regional organization. The Human Security framework will be used to identify and analyze the various forms of threats experienced by Rohingya refugees, while International Organization theory will assess how ASEAN carries out its response to the crisis.

ASEAN's response to regional crises is strongly influenced by the ASEAN Way, particularly the principles of consensus and non-interference. ASEAN continues to maintain neutrality and respect for member states' autonomy in addressing regional challenges. These norms shape the organization's decision-making process and help explain why ASEAN often adopts cautious and non-

coercive approaches toward sensitive internal issues such as the Rohingya crisis (Purwanti, 2023).

Regional International Organizations in Clive Archer's Perspective

Clive Archer's analysis of international organizations in the context of international relations reveals that these entities serve not only as forums for cooperation between countries but also take on various roles that evolve in response to complex global and regional issues. In the fourth edition of his book "*International Organizations"*, Archer emphasizes that the roles of these organizations are multidimensional and cannot be simplified to a single function. International organizations can act as political actors, arenas for interaction between countries, policy instruments, norm carriers, policy coordinators, and bureaucratic institutions with a certain degree of autonomy (Archer, 2015). This perspective aligns with the definition provided by This perspective aligns with the definition provided by Adelia, who describe international organizations as formal associations of sovereign states established through international agreements to facilitate cooperation and manage shared interests across political, economic, and social domains. They argue that international organizations serve as institutional frameworks enabling coordination and collective governance among member states.

Archer identifies several key roles that international organizations can fulfill. First, they function as forums for cooperation and communication, providing a formal space for member states to interact, negotiate, and build consensus. Second, they serve as normative frameworks or norm carriers, shaping and disseminating norms that guide the behavior of member states. Third, they act as policy coordinators, managing cross-border policies and overseeing the implementation of joint agreements (Archer, 2015)**.** Additionally, Archer highlights the role of international organizations as legitimizing agents, providing legitimacy for certain actions or policies at the international and regional levels. Finally, he describes them as bureaucratic institutions with limited

autonomy, characterized by their own structures, procedures, and administrative capacities, while still being constrained by the interests of their member states (Archer, 2015).

Archer notes that not all of these roles are always relevant or dominant in every analysis. Therefore, the selection of the roles of international organizations should be tailored to the specific focus and objectives of the study. In the context of this research, the discussion of ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis will concentrate on three primary roles: ASEAN as an actor, an arena, and an instrument (Archer, 2015). These roles were selected because they are most relevant to understanding how ASEAN operates as a regional organization in the realm of human security, particularly in addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis.

ASEAN as an actor refers to the organization's capacity to act collectively through official statements, joint policies, or regional initiatives that reflect ASEAN's position as an independent political entity. In contrast, ASEAN as an arena describes the space for interaction and negotiation among member countries, where national interests, the principle of non-interference, and regional political dynamics converge in response to the Rohingya crisis. Finally, ASEAN as an instrument pertains to the mechanisms, institutions, and cooperative tools used by member states to address the issue, such as official forums, consultation mechanisms, or collaboration with external actors.

While the roles of other international organizations, such as ASEAN as a norm-setter, policy coordinator, legitimacy agent, and bureaucratic institution, are recognized by Archer, they are not the primary focus of this study. This is because these roles do not directly explain the dynamics of ASEAN's involvement in the Rohingya human security issue. Therefore, the analysis will limit itself to these three main roles to maintain a clear focus and ensure a strong connection between the theoretical framework and the objectives of the study (Archer, 2015). This analytical limitation aligns with the argument by Abbott & Snidal (Abbott & Snidal, 2017), which asserts that states operate through formal international

organizations by selectively delegating specific functions to enhance cooperation, rather than empowering organizations to perform all possible roles simultaneously. Thus, international organizations are utilized in ways that reflect the interests and strategic considerations of their member states, underscoring the necessity to prioritize the most relevant organizational roles in a given empirical context (Abbott & Snidal, 2017).

In addition to Archer's perspective on international organizations, this study also considers the ASEAN Way as a normative framework shaping ASEAN's regional response. The ASEAN Way is a unique pattern of interaction within the ASEAN community that prioritizes deliberation, consensus, conflict avoidance, and informal, non-confrontational diplomacy. This approach is consistent with ASEAN's broader tendency to maintain neutrality and uphold the autonomy of its member states when responding to regional issues, thereby limiting the use of coercive measures in addressing sensitive political challenges (Purwanti, 2023). One of its key principles is non-interference, which mandates that member countries refrain from intervening in each other's domestic affairs. While this principle serves as a mechanism for regional political stability, it can also become a structural obstacle when ASEAN faces issues with cross-border implications, such as the Rohingya crisis, which is a significant concern in the region (Tekunan, 2014). The persistence of ASEAN's non-interference principle is not just a normative stance; it reflects the shared confidence among member states in their ability to govern domestically. Suzuki (Suzuki, 2019) argues that ASEAN remains non-intrusive because its members believe they have sufficient state capacity to manage internal challenges, even those that produce regional or cross-border effects.

Human Security

The concept of human security was first introduced by the UNDP in its 1994 Human Development Report. This concept aimed to broaden the understanding of security, which during the Cold War was narrowly focused on the

state and military. Human security acknowledges that threats to individuals can arise from violence, hunger, legal vulnerability, loss of community identity, economic instability, and environmental disasters. Thus, security should be understood not only as a state's ability to defend itself but also as the ability of individuals to live free from fear, free from want, and with dignity (Williams & McDonald, 2023). The UNDP identified seven dimensions to explain the spectrum of threats: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994) .While all these dimensions are relevant in describing the comprehensive conditions of Rohingya refugees, not all contribute equally to understanding the relationship between the Rohingya crisis and ASEAN's policy dynamics (Williams & McDonald, 2023)

However, these aspects are primarily related to the capacity of international humanitarian agencies, such as UNHCR, IOM, and transnational NGOs, and do not directly influence ASEAN's response as a regional organization. In other words, while these four dimensions are crucial for describing the Rohingya situation, they do not fully explain ASEAN's limited response to the issue of Rohingya refugees.

While the other four dimensions of human security are recognized as important in the broader context, they are not emphasized in this analysis because they are less relevant to the core issues. For instance, economic security, although it does impose a fiscal burden on recipient countries, is not a major factor shaping ASEAN's decision-making dynamics. Similarly, food security is more relevant to the operational needs of refugee camps than to regional policy initiatives. Health security is pertinent regarding the health conditions of refugees, but it does not play a significant role in ASEAN discussions about non-interference or regional intervention. Environmental security has no direct connection to the causes or developments of the Rohingya crisis, so it is not a strategic dimension for explaining ASEAN's response (Williams & McDonald, 2023)

This study aims to clarify that human security is not intended to encompass the entire spectrum of humanitarian threats but is specifically directed as an analytical framework to assess the limited regional response of ASEAN to the Rohingya crisis, which has affected several regions within ASEAN. By focusing on the dimensions of personal security, community security, and political security, this study seeks to examine ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis through a human security perspective.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive research method, aiming to understand ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis through document and literature studies, non-numerical data analysis, and interpretation of meaning (Sugiyono, 2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Results and Discussion section aims to present and analyze research findings related to the Rohingya crisis and ASEAN's response as a regional organization. The discussion begins with an introduction that maps the empirical context of the Rohingya crisis, including systemic violence in Myanmar, statelessness, and cross-border migration patterns in Southeast Asia, as a basis for understanding the growing threat to human security. Next, the analysis focuses on two main aspects. First, an analysis of ASEAN's role as an international organization using Clive Archer's framework, which includes ASEAN's role as an actor, arena, and instrument in responding to the Rohingya crisis. Second, an analysis of the Rohingya crisis threat from a human security perspective, focusing on the dimensions of personal security, community security, and political security.

Crisis Rohingya: Statelessness, Displacement, and regional impact in ASEAN

The Rohingya crisis is one of the most complex and protracted humanitarian issues in Southeast Asia, rooted not only in Myanmar's domestic dynamics but also with significant cross-border implications. Since the deterioration of the political and security situation following the 2021

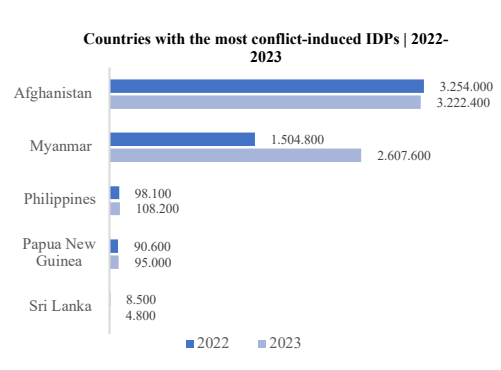
military coup, the escalation of violence and human rights violations against the Rohingya ethnic group has further exacerbated the living conditions of this group, (Ramadhan et al., 2023). These developments have turned the Rohingya crisis into a regional issue that directly impacts ASEAN countries (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023; UNHCR, 2023).

Based on a regional security perspective, (Bennet, 1995) that security interactions tend to cluster regionally, where domestic conflicts can generate cross-border effects. In this sense, the Rohingya crisis illustrates a regional security complex in Southeast Asia, as instability in Myanmar has produced spillover pressures affecting neighboring ASEAN member states. Therefore, mapping the context of the crisis and patterns of threats faced by the Rohingya is important as a basis for understanding the dynamics of human security developing in the region. Thus, mapping the context of the crisis and patterns of threats faced by the Rohingya is important as a basis for understanding the dynamics of human security developing in the region.

The context of systemic violence in Myanmar continues to be a major factor driving the forced displacement of the Rohingya ethnic group and worsening their human security conditions. Following the 2021 military coup, the escalation of armed conflict and military operations has significantly increased insecurity, particularly for minority groups that have long suffered structural discrimination (Ramadhan et al., 2023). According to the regional report (UNHCR, 2023) it should be noted that throughout 2023, more than 1.4 million people were forced to flee within Myanmar due to conflict and violence, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to around 2.6 million by the end of the year. Although the report does not specify the forms of violence experienced, the scale of this internal displacement shows that the security environment in Myanmar remains highly vulnerable and continues to pose a serious threat to the personal security of the entire Rohingya community (UNHCR, 2023).

As shown in Figure 1, Myanmar recorded a significant increase in conflict-induced internal displacement between 2022 and 2023, with the number of internally displaced persons rising from approximately 1.5 million to 2.6 million. This increase illustrates the deteriorating security conditions in Myanmar and highlights the growing vulnerability faced by affected populations, including the Rohingya community.

Figure 1. IDPs in Myanmar



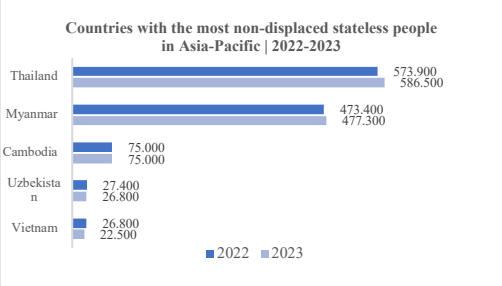
Source: (UNHCR, 2023)

This vulnerability is exacerbated by the statelessness experienced by the Rohingya ethnic group, which is the structural root of various political security threats. The statelessness experienced by the Rohingya exacerbates their vulnerability to structural violence and repeated forced expulsions. This situation not only worsens the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, but also creates cross-border implications through the flow of Rohingya refugees to ASEAN countries, recipient countries face domestic social and security pressures due to ongoing irregular migration therefore, the Rohingya crisis has developed into a regional security issue in Southeast Asia (Sultana et al., 2023).

The lack of state protection makes the Rohingya heavily dependent on external humanitarian responses, while their country of origin is the main source of threats to their safety. These conditions explain why the Rohingya crisis has developed into a cross-border humanitarian issue in the Southeast Asian region. (UNHCR, 2023) It is reported that of the approximately 2.5 million stateless persons in the Asia-Pacific region, 69 percent are Rohingya, making them the largest stateless group in the region. Of this total population, approximately 1.09 million are refugees, 160,000 are internally displaced persons (IDPs), and approximately 19,000 are registered as asylum seekers. In addition, approximately 477,300 stateless Rohingya

still live in Myanmar without citizenship recognition, access to legal identity, or state protection (UNHCR, 2023). Within the framework of human security theory, this condition of statelessness poses a direct threat to political security because the Rohingya have no inherent political rights, legal protection, or access to the formal administrative mechanisms that should be guaranteed by the state (UNDP, 1994) .

Figure 2. Stateless Person



Source: (UNHCR, 2023)

Figure 2 demonstrates the scale of statelessness in the Asia-Pacific region and shows that Myanmar remains one of the countries with the largest stateless populations. This condition is particularly relevant to the Rohingya community, whose lack of citizenship continues to undermine their political security and access to legal protection.

The combination of systemic violence and statelessness has driven repeated and increasingly risky waves of Rohingya migration. Since the 2015 Andaman Sea crisis, Rohingya movements by land and sea have increased significantly once again (Displacement, 2023) It was noted that throughout 2023, there were around 6,500 people who traveled from Myanmar and Bangladesh, including 4,500 Rohingya who took the sea route. In fact, there was a 483 percent increase in Rohingya maritime movements between 2021 and 2023. The year 2023 was also recorded as one of the deadliest periods since 2015, with an estimated one death or missing person for every eight people who traveled by sea (Displacement, 2023). This data confirms that threats to personal security occur not only in their country of origin, but also during the migration process, during which the Rohingya face the risk of death, violence, lack of justice, human smuggling, and various forms of exploitation perpetrated against the entire Rohingya community.

This migration pattern shows a relatively consistent regional route involving a number of ASEAN countries as transit and destination areas. According to (UNHCR, 2023), The main routes taken by the Rohingya include Rakhine State, Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, the Andaman Sea, and on to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In this context, Indonesia has seen a 1,261 percent surge in Rohingya arrivals between 2021 and 2023, particularly in Aceh and North Sumatra, with the largest increase occurring in the Aceh region. Malaysia remains the primary destination due to economic factors, while Thailand serves as a transit country, where some migrants are detained or redirected to more dangerous land routes (UNHCR, 2023). This migration flow not only poses a threat to personal security, but also impacts community security on the mainland, such as increased social pressure, resistance from local communities, and the limited capacity of coastal communities to respond to the arrival of refugees.

Overall, the series of systemic violence in Myanmar, the statelessness experienced by the Rohingya, and the increasing wave of cross-border migration indicate that this crisis is no longer local in nature, but has developed into a regional human security challenge. This threat to personal security arises both in the country of origin and along the migration routes taken by the Rohingya, while pressure on community security is beginning to be felt in the landing areas in ASEAN countries. These conditions emphasize that the Rohingya crisis needs to be understood within a broader human security framework, while also opening up space to assess the role and response of ASEAN as a regional organization in facing this increasingly complex humanitarian challenge. The next section will discuss this issue through an analysis based on the human security framework.

Analyzis of International Organization's Role (Clive Archer)

After mapping the context of the Rohingya crisis as a humanitarian issue with cross-border implications in Southeast Asia, the next part of this discussion focuses on the role of ASEAN as a regional organization in responding to the crisis. To understand the dynamics and

limitations of ASEAN's response, the analysis uses the perspective of international organizations as proposed by Clive Archer. Although ASEAN has produced various normative agreements, their implementation is hampered by the absence of enforcement mechanisms against member states. This highlights the gap between ASEAN's normative commitments and its institutional capacity to respond to gross human rights violations (Ar Rasyid & Rijal, 2023). Therefore, the analysis focuses on three main dimensions of the role of international organizations, namely ASEAN as a regional actor, an arena for cooperation and diplomacy, and an instrument of policy in handling the Rohingya crisis.

ASEAN Role as an Actor

Within Clive Archer's framework of international organization theory, international organizations can be understood as actors when they are able to act collectively, represent the common interests of member states, and take certain positions or actions in response to international issues (Archer, 2015). As actors, international organizations serve not only as forums for discussion, but also as entities with normative and political capacity to influence regional and international dynamics.

In the context of the Rohingya crisis, ASEAN's position as an actor has been limited and passive, although this crisis has developed into a regional issue with cross-border implications, particularly for Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, ASEAN has not been able to position itself as a regional actor that collectively provides a firm political response to Myanmar. This is evident from the lack of official statements from ASEAN that explicitly highlight human rights violations against the Rohingya as a serious threat to regional security. The limitations of ASEAN's role as an actor cannot be separated from the principle of non-interference, which is the basis of the ASEAN Way (Tekunan, 2014).

The Rohingya crisis has significantly impacted political dynamics within ASEAN countries and the region as a whole. Government responses to

refugees are often influenced by domestic political considerations, the sensitivity of bilateral relations with Myanmar, public pressure, and concerns about internal stability.

ASEAN's restrained approach to managing the Rohingya crisis is closely tied to its cost-benefit calculations and adherence to the principle of non-interference. According to Changrui dan Lee (2023), ASEAN has deliberately avoided coercive measures and the use of force, prioritizing consensus and maintaining relations with Myanmar. This stance, however, has attracted criticism from both member states and the international community. The principle of non-interference limits ASEAN's ability to exert direct pressure on its member states, including Myanmar. As a result, while ASEAN acknowledges the Rohingya crisis as a humanitarian issue, it tends to avoid framing it politically in a way that holds Myanmar directly responsible. Clive Archer (Archer, 2015) points out that this situation indicates ASEAN's capacity as an actor is diminished by its commitment to the sovereignty of its member states.

From a human security perspective, ASEAN's limited role has directly contributed to the failure to develop a collective response aimed at protecting the political, personal, and community security of the Rohingya. Data (UNHCR, 2023) highlights that millions of Rohingya remain stateless, experience forced displacement, and face threats during cross-border migration. However, ASEAN has yet to utilize its position as a regional actor to advocate for a joint political protection framework or establish binding regional mechanisms to address the needs of this vulnerable group.

In summary, an analysis of ASEAN's role reveals a gap between its normative capacity as a regional organization and its practical implementation of that role. While ASEAN exists as an institutional actor, it has not functioned effectively as a political actor capable of responding comprehensively to the Rohingya crisis. This situation underscores that ASEAN's limitations as an actor are key factors contributing to the weak regional response

to the humanitarian crisis faced by the Rohingya people.

ASEAN Role as an Arena

According to Clive Archer's framework, international organizations can be understood as arenas—institutional spaces where member states interact, negotiate, and express their interests without necessarily making binding decisions (Archer, 2015). As arenas, international organizations provide forums for political communication, the exchange of views, and the coordination of attitudes between countries. However, these interactions do not always lead to concrete collective action (Abbott & Snidal, 2017).

In the context of the Rohingya crisis, ASEAN's role as a forum is more prominent than its role as an active decision-maker. ASEAN has consistently facilitated various meetings through the ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, and temporary urgent meetings to discuss the situation in Myanmar and the broader regional impact of the Rohingya crisis. However, these discussions tend to be diplomatic and normative in nature, emphasizing dialogue, regional stability, and humanitarian aid, without exerting substantial political pressure on Myanmar.

This illustrates the general nature of intergovernmental organizations, which primarily serve as platforms for consultation and coordination, rather than authoritative decision-makers. As Bennet (Bennet, 1995) explains, international organizations are designed to function through consensus and cooperation, as member states maintain sovereignty and ultimate control over decision-making processes. ASEAN's role as an arena exposes an institutional paradox: on one hand, ASEAN has successfully maintained communication among member states and prevented the escalation of open conflict at the regional level; on the other hand, ASEAN's function, which remains at the level of a discussion forum, has led to the Rohingya issue being frequently talked about without any significant change in the human security conditions of the Rohingya people.

Despite the crisis lasting more than a decade and resulting in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the personal and political security of the Rohingya has not significantly improved (UNHCR, 2023). From a human security perspective, ASEAN's limitations as an arena are evident in the absence of regional mechanisms explicitly oriented toward protecting Rohingya individuals and communities. ASEAN forums often prioritize the interests of member states over the needs of vulnerable groups. Consequently, the discourse regarding Rohingya human security has not developed into a binding regional agenda but remains at the level of rhetoric and minimal consensus (Achmad et al., 2021).

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that ASEAN's role as an arena is ambivalent. While ASEAN has succeeded in fulfilling its basic function as a space for regional communication, it has failed to translate these discussions into an effective collective response to the human security threat facing the Rohingya. Within Clive Archer's framework, this situation confirms that the existence of an international organization as an arena does not automatically ensure protection for vulnerable groups if it is not supported by the political capacity and collective will of its member states (Archer, 2015).

ASEAN's Role as an Instrument

Clive Archer, within the context of international organization theory, describes international organizations as instruments that member states use to implement collective interests through policies, declarations, cooperation mechanisms, and various normative frameworks (Archer, 2015). In this framework, international organizations do not operate independently; instead, they serve as tools that facilitate the coordination of member states' actions based on the consensus that can be achieved among them. The effectiveness of these organizations as instruments relies heavily on the political will of member states and the mutually agreed normative constraints.

In addressing the Rohingya crisis, ASEAN has acted as an instrument through various joint statements, humanitarian mechanisms, and non-

binding regional cooperation frameworks. A key instrument employed by ASEAN is a consensus-based diplomatic approach coupled with limited humanitarian assistance, which is reflected in statements made by the ASEAN Chair, ministerial meetings, and the operations of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) (Fan & Krebs, 2014). However, these instruments primarily focus on the general humanitarian impact and do not address the root causes of the issues faced by the Rohingya, such as systemic violence and statelessness.

The limitations of ASEAN's role as an instrument are evident in the lack of a policy enforcement mechanism that could compel Myanmar to alter its treatment of the Rohingya. The principles of non-interference and the ASEAN Way restrict the use of coercive or interventionist measures, resulting in ASEAN policies that often stay at the level of moral persuasion and symbolic humanitarian aid. As noted by Archer (Archer, 2015), this situation illustrates an international organization that functions as a passive instrument, whose effectiveness is wholly reliant on the collective willingness of member states to take action.

The implications for human security are significant. The limited instruments at ASEAN's disposal have failed to protect the Rohingya regarding personal and political security, especially in light of systemic violence in Myanmar and the absence of citizenship. Furthermore, the weakness of regional instruments adversely affects community security in host countries, given the lack of comprehensive regional policies to manage refugee flows and ensure fair responsibility-sharing (UNHCR, 2023). Thus, despite the existence of several formal instruments, the restrictions in their application and design reveal that ASEAN's role remains insufficient to effectively respond to the Rohingya crisis within the human security framework.

These limitations indicate that the regional response has not fully addressed the complexity of the Rohingya crisis, which is cross-border and multi-dimensional. To gain a clearer

understanding of these limitations' implications, the following analysis will explore the Rohingya crisis through the lens of human security, examining how threats to personal security, community security, and political security continue to persist in the absence of effective regional intervention.

Analyzis Human Security

The Rohingya crisis cannot be examined solely through the lens of ASEAN's role as a regional organization; it must also be understood in terms of its actual impact on human security. This section employs a human security framework to assess the various forms of vulnerability faced by the Rohingya, both as individuals and as communities affected by conflict, statelessness, and forced migration. This approach allows for an analysis that transcends a state-centric perspective, placing human safety, dignity, and well-being at the forefront.

In this context, the analysis highlights three main dimensions of human security: personal security, community security, and political security. These dimensions have been selected because they are particularly relevant in explaining the situation of the Rohingya in their country of origin, as well as in ASEAN countries that serve as transit and destination points. Furthermore, this analysis aims to illustrate how the limitations of ASEAN's regional response contribute to increasing threats to human security in the Southeast Asian region.

Personal Security

According to the human security theoretical framework, personal security emphasizes the protection of individuals from physical violence, threats to life, and conditions that jeopardize human survival (UNDP, 1994). Empirical data from the UNHCR highlights that the Rohingya crisis involves threats to personal security that are not merely situational but also systemic and multi-layered, beginning in the country of origin and continuing along the cross-border migration route in Southeast Asia.

Threats to the personal security of the Rohingya arise from systematic violence by the Myanmar military, including torture, arbitrary arrests, and the risk of human trafficking during their sea

escapes. These conditions are the primary causes of mass displacement and create cross-border tensions affecting Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023).

In Myanmar, especially following the military coup in 2021, an ongoing climate of violence has created persistently unsafe conditions for the Rohingya ethnic group (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Official data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (UNHCR, 2023) indicates that more than 1.4 million people were internally displaced persons (IDPs) to 2.6 million by year-end. This scale of displacement demonstrates that threats to personal security are no longer incidental but have become a permanent state of affairs, compelling Rohingya individuals to leave their homes in search of basic safety. In this context, forced displacement can be understood not merely as a consequence of armed conflict but as a survival strategy resulting from the state's failure to ensure its citizens' security.

The threats to the personal security of the Rohingya do not cease in their home region; rather, they continue and often escalate during the migration process. Data (UNHCR, 2023) reveals a dramatic 483 percent increase in Rohingya maritime movements between 2021 and 2023. In 2023 alone, approximately 4,500 Rohingya undertook perilous sea journeys, with an estimated one in eight individuals dying or going missing at sea. These findings indicate that the migration route itself has become a new realm of vulnerability, where Rohingya individuals face risks of death, human smuggling, exploitation, and dire travel conditions that endanger their lives.

From a human security perspective, these conditions highlight the failure of personal security protections not only at the level of the country of origin but also regionally. Although the Rohingya displacement has directly affected ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, existing regional responses have not established comprehensive protection mechanisms that effectively ensure individual safety during cross-border migration.

Consequently, the personal security of the Rohingya remains precarious; they are inadequately protected by their country of origin and do not receive sufficient security guarantees from receiving countries or the ASEAN regional framework.

International organizations, as noted by Clive Archer, point out that these circumstances reflect the structural limitations of ASEAN as a regional organization, which lacks the autonomous capacity to act as a protector of individual security. Operating on the consensus of its member states, ASEAN cannot surpass the mandates and basic norms that govern it, including the principle of non-interference. As a result, although threats to the personal security of the Rohingya have evolved into a cross-border issue, ASEAN tends to limit its response to technical, reactive, and short-term humanitarian measures without addressing the necessity for comprehensive protection of individual safety.

The Rohingya crisis should no longer be viewed solely as a domestic humanitarian issue in Myanmar; it must be recognized as a regional threat to personal security that demands collective responsibility. ASEAN's limitations in providing effective protection mechanisms for Rohingya individuals reinforce the argument that the organization's response is constrained by normative and institutional restrictions, as highlighted by Clive Archer. Furthermore, ASEAN continues to be focused on the concept of the ASEAN Way and the principle of non-interference, which prevents it from fully adopting a human security approach, especially in safeguarding the personal security of the entire Rohingya community.

Community Security

The increasing flow of Rohingya migrants poses a significant threat not only to individual security but also to community security in recipient and transit countries throughout Southeast Asia. Reports indicate that the migration route of the Rohingya has remained relatively consistent, starting from Rakhine State in Myanmar, moving to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, and then crossing the Andaman Sea to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia (UNHCR, 2023). Notably,

Indonesia has experienced a staggering 1,261 percent increase in Rohingya refugee arrivals between 2021 and 2023, especially in the Aceh and North Sumatra regions, making these coastal areas the primary landing points for Rohingya individuals.

The threats to community security stem from the fact that the Rohingya are an ethnic and religious group that has undergone identity erasure, discrimination, and social exclusion both in their homeland and in host countries. Their community security is jeopardized not only by physical violence but also by the erosion of their communal identity, making their existence increasingly vulnerable within the social structure of Southeast Asia.

The sudden influx of large numbers of refugees puts immense pressure on local communities, particularly in coastal regions where economic resources and infrastructure are already limited. These communities face challenges in accessing basic services such as food, temporary shelter, and healthcare, which can lead to social tensions between local residents and refugees (Ansar, 2021). In some instances, this situation has resulted in resistance from local communities toward the Rohingya refugees, who many perceive as an additional burden on already vulnerable social and economic conditions.

Moreover, threats to community security are also evident in the weak mechanisms for managing refugees at the regional level. The lack of preparedness among ASEAN countries to establish a coordinated collective response framework has led to an uneven distribution of the responsibilities associated with refugee management, disproportionately affecting certain countries and communities. Consequently, local populations in the landing areas have become the most impacted, with insufficient structural support from the ASEAN regional mechanism.

The human security framework in this context suggests that threats to community security during the Rohingya crisis stem not only from the presence of refugees but also from the limited capacity of local communities and the absence of

effective regional mechanisms to address the social impacts of forced cross-border displacement sustainably.

Thus, the Rohingya crisis presents not only humanitarian challenges for individual refugees but also tests the social resilience of communities in ASEAN countries. This situation underscores the limitations of regional responses in maintaining human security at the community level. The analysis reveals that the crisis affects not just individual security but also creates social pressures within receiving communities. This confirms that the Rohingya crisis has evolved into a regional community security challenge that necessitates a collective response from ASEAN, which has largely been passive in its approach due to the principle of non-interference inherent in the organization.

Political Security

The threat to political security in the Rohingya crisis is primarily rooted in the systemic statelessness experienced by this group. Myanmar's refusal to recognize the Rohingya as citizens has placed them outside the protections of the country's political and legal systems, creating conditions of structural and ongoing vulnerability (UNCHR, 2023). Of the approximately 2.5 million stateless persons in the Asia-Pacific region, 69 percent are Rohingya, making them the largest stateless group in the area. This includes around 1.09 million who are refugees, 160,000 classified as internally displaced persons (IDPs), and thousands more who are registered as asylum seekers in various countries.

Lastly, political security is the most critical dimension since the Rohingya's stateless status means they lack legal protection from any nation. Since the passage of the Citizenship Law in Myanmar in 1982, the Rohingya people have been denied citizenship, leading to a lack of access to justice, political rights, and basic civil liberties. This situation has resulted in the loss of fundamental rights such as freedom of movement, education, healthcare, and legal protection (di Gaetano, 2013). In terms of human security, this statelessness poses a serious threat to both the political and personal security of the Rohingya. Their statelessness leaves them entirely reliant on external protection, whether through

international law or regional responses (di Gaetano, 2013). However, many recipient countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, leaving political security an unresolved issue even after refugees cross national borders (Fahira, 2022).

Within the framework of human security, this statelessness poses a direct threat to political security because the Rohingya lack inherent political rights, are not recognized administratively, and do not receive legal protection from their country of origin. Without citizenship, the Rohingya have no access to formal political institutions, justice mechanisms, or state guarantees of their safety and basic rights (UNDP, 1994). This situation limits their ability to demand political rights and effectively closes the space for their participation in national and regional political structures.

The threat to the political security of the Rohingya extends to the regional level when they become refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented migrants in ASEAN countries. Most ASEAN nations, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, leaving Rohingya refugees in a precarious position without a clear legal status (Willy et al., 2024). Consequently, they face increased vulnerabilities, including arbitrary detention, restrictions on mobility, and a lack of access to long-term political protection mechanisms (UNHCR, 2023).

Furthermore, the absence of a binding regional policy framework under ASEAN worsens the threats to the political security of the Rohingya. The principle of non-interference, a cornerstone of the ASEAN Way, limits the organization's ability to exert political pressure on Myanmar or to create binding collective protection mechanisms for member states (Tekunan, 2014). In this context, the Rohingya crisis reflects not only the failure of Myanmar to guarantee the political security of its citizens but also highlights the limitations of the ASEAN regional system in providing political protection for vulnerable groups across borders.

Thus, the threat to the political security of the Rohingya is multidimensional: it stems from Myanmar's denial of citizenship, persists through legal uncertainty in host countries, and is reinforced by the lack of effective regional political protection mechanisms. This situation underscores that the Rohingya crisis cannot be viewed solely as a humanitarian issue; it is a systemic failure of political protection at both the national and regional levels, which directly impacts the overall human security of the Rohingya people.

CONCLUSION

This study examined ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis through the perspectives of international organization theory and human security. The findings demonstrate that the Rohingya crisis has evolved beyond a domestic issue in Myanmar into a regional humanitarian challenge characterized by systemic violence, statelessness, and cross-border displacement. These conditions have generated persistent threats to the personal, community, and political security of the Rohingya across Southeast Asia.

Using Clive Archer's framework, the study finds that ASEAN's response remains limited in its roles as an actor, arena, and instrument. As an actor, ASEAN has been unable to formulate a firm collective political response toward Myanmar due to its adherence to consensus-based decision-making and the principle of non-interference. As an arena, ASEAN has provided space for dialogue and diplomatic engagement among member states, yet these discussions have not translated into effective collective measures capable of addressing the root causes of the crisis. As an instrument, ASEAN's response has largely focused on humanitarian assistance and non-binding cooperation mechanisms, which alleviate immediate humanitarian needs but fail to provide long-term protection for the Rohingya.

From a human security perspective, these limitations have significant consequences. The persistence of violence and forced displacement continues to threaten personal security, while increasing refugee movements create pressures on community security in

receiving areas. At the same time, the Rohingya's stateless status and the absence of comprehensive regional protection mechanisms undermine their political security. The study therefore argues that ASEAN's normative commitments, particularly the ASEAN Way and the principle of non-interference, function simultaneously as the foundation of regional cooperation and as constraints on effective collective action.

Ultimately, the Rohingya crisis reveals a gap between ASEAN's normative aspirations and its practical capacity to address transnational humanitarian challenges. While ASEAN has succeeded in maintaining regional stability and dialogue, its response remains insufficient to provide comprehensive human security protection. This demonstrates that normative constraints and institutional limitations continue to shape ASEAN's ability to respond effectively to regional humanitarian crises.

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