

On Rohingya crisis: Suu Kyi in denial

Nearly three months after [violence escalated against the Rohingya](#) in Myanmar's Rakhine State, leading to the exodus of more than half a million to neighbouring Bangladesh, State Counsellor [Aung San Suu Kyi finally visited the region](#). By all accounts, Ms. Suu Kyi had little more than platitudes to offer and her words showed no recognition that what transpired is a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing", as the UN Human Rights chief put it. This is extremely disappointing. Ms. Suu Kyi endured years of house arrest and unremitting hostility from the military junta before emerging victorious in a free and fair election two years ago. But despite taking over a top post after the election, her civilian government's powers have been clipped as the military still holds sway over defence, home affairs and border issues. Ms. Suu Kyi, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, has found it pragmatic not to challenge the official rhetoric in Myanmar, which suggests the military's actions were aimed at tackling "terror" in Rakhine. This could be for two reasons. First, she does not want to upset the fragile balance of power in the fledgling democracy after years of rule by the junta. Second, there is a clear lack of empathy for the Rohingya in a country that has seen the rise of Buddhist and Bamar majoritarianism that has corresponded with an official "othering" of the Rohingya, who are Muslims, as non-citizens. Despite the widespread international condemnation of her government's actions, Ms. Suu Kyi has sought to pander to the domestic gallery by defending the military's actions in Rakhine. Her conduct during her visit to the region this week suggests that she has no intention of effecting any real or meaningful change in her government's position on the Rohingya.

The Rohingya, meanwhile, have been left to deal with themselves, unwanted and stateless in their homeland and forced to migrate, mostly to Bangladesh, in hazardous conditions. Dhaka has been trying to drum up support and relief for the constant and unremitting stream of refugees making their way to Bangladeshi soil. Against this background, it is unfortunate that New Delhi has turned its back on the Rohingya refugees, leading to perceptions that it has failed to rise to its status as a regional power and take the lead in dealing with the humanitarian crisis. The Myanmar government has said that it will repatriate returning Rohingya if they prove they were residents of Rakhine, but it is not clear how the refugees would be able to do so having been denied citizenship and having fled their villages under duress with barely anything in hand. Myanmar's evasiveness makes it all the more imperative that the international community, including India, quickly provide succour for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who are living on the edge.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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