

A CALL FOR RENEWED LEADERSHIP

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh

Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
Salma Zahid, Member of Parliament
Sameer Zuberi, Member of Parliament



Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh

1. Introduction	1
2. Objective of the Delegation	2
3. Repatriation: Aspirations and Realities	3
4. Security, Criminality, and Cross-Border Instability	4
5. A Crisis of Education, Youth, and Mental Health	6
6. Aid Cuts and Desperation	7
7. Host Community Pressures and Policy Constraints	8
8. The Needs of the Host Community: Parallel Vulnerability and Shared Strain	9
9. The Local NGO Perspective	9
10. Canada's Role and Reputation	10
11. Engagement with the Government of Bangladesh: Strengthening Bilateral Relations	11
12. The Canadian Response on the Ground	11
13. International Response	12
14. Summary of Key Findings	13
15. Recommendations for Renewed Canadian Engagement	14
16. The Role of Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group in Sustaining Momentum	15
17. Conclusion: A Call for Principled Canadian Leadership	15

1. Introduction

As global attention shifts to new and escalating conflicts, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, the world's largest refugee settlement, has become a protracted tragedy marked by declining funds and deteriorating conditions. Once a focus of international concern, the situation has now faded from the headlines, leaving over a million people in a state of deepening despair. The complex challenges of statelessness, security and survival demand more than short-term relief; they require sustained political will and long-term, principled policy engagement.

Recognizing this critical juncture, with the support of Human Concern International (HCI), Canada's oldest Muslim charity, a cross-partisan Canadian parliamentary delegation went to Bangladesh from November 8-15, 2025. The mission's purpose was to conduct an on-the-ground assessment of the current realities facing Rohingya refugees and their host communities, observe the impact of Canadian-supported humanitarian efforts, and inform a renewed, long-term Canadian policy response.

This report conveys the delegation's firsthand findings from Cox's Bazar and Dhaka. It presents an analysis of a crisis where the systemic collapse of hope has become the primary engine of instability, fueling a cascade of security, protection, and mental health emergencies. It provides on the ground observation, engagement, and testimonial based evidence recommendations for the Government of Canada to re-assert its leadership on one of the most pressing human rights challenges of our time.

2. Objective of the Delegation

Parliamentary fact-finding missions are a critical instrument of foreign policy and humanitarian strategy, particularly for protracted crises that have faded from public and political view. They provide an unvarnished perspective that official briefings cannot replicate, grounding policy discussions in the lived realities of affected populations. By bearing witness directly, parliamentarians can challenge assumptions, identify overlooked risks and opportunities, and build the cross-party consensus required for sustained engagement. This mission was designed to fulfill that strategic function.

The delegation's core objectives were to:

- Assess the current humanitarian conditions in the Rohingya refugee camps.
- Observe Canadian-supported humanitarian efforts on the ground.
- Rebuild awareness within Canada's Parliament of the ongoing crisis.
- Inform a long-term, principled Canadian response through evidence-based recommendations.

Delegation Composition and Credentials

The Parliamentary Delegation was composed of the following Members of Parliament and Senators:

- **MP Salma Zahid:** Scarborough Centre–Don Valley East (Liberal)
 - Chair, Standing Committee on Science and Research
 - Member of the Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group
- **MP Sameer Zuberi:** Pierrefonds–Dollard (Liberal)
 - Member, Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration
 - Member, Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development
 - Member of the Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group
- **Senator Salma Atallahjan:** Ontario (Conservative)
 - Member, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs
 - Former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights
 - Member of the Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group.

The delegation was accompanied by Human Concern International (HCI) and Human Concern USA and other experts:

- **Mahmuda Khan:** Global CEO, Human Concern International (HCI)
- **Masum Mahbub:** CEO, Human Concern USA (HCUSA)
- **Usama Khan:** Strategic Advisor to HCI CEO
- **Ahmad Attia:** CEO, Gestalt Communications

The delegation's methodology combined high-level diplomatic engagement with direct, ground-level observation. The itinerary included travel in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, with focused visits to refugee camps #4 and #20 Extension. This approach facilitated consultations with a comprehensive range of stakeholders, including senior United Nations officials (UNDSS, IOM), advisors to the Government of Bangladesh, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), local and international non-governmental organizations, and most critically Rohingya community members, with a specific focus on hearing from women and youth. The methodology prioritized the direct testimony of affected populations, ensuring that their voices and priorities are central to this report's findings. As MP Sameer Zuberi noted, "It was critical for us to listen directly to the Rohingya who are directly affected. The international community has a responsibility to remain engaged. Our visit deepened our understanding of what meaningful support looks like."

This report is therefore grounded in a combination of direct observation, expert testimony and the powerful, firsthand accounts of those living at the heart of the crisis.

3. Repatriation: Aspirations and Realities

The scale and protracted nature of the Rohingya crisis are staggering. The displacement of the Rohingya people from Myanmar is a crisis spanning over 40 years, with major waves of violence and expulsion long preceding the 2017 genocide. Today, the camps in Cox's Bazar

host a population of approximately 1.2 million residents, though Bangladeshi officials, factoring in population growth and surrounding communities, now estimate the total number of displaced Rohingya in the region to be closer to 1.5 million. The crisis is compounded by a concerning demographic reality: an estimated 30,000 children are born in the camps every year. A senior Bangladeshi official warned the delegation that population growth and prolonged displacement are creating escalating long-term risks, particularly for youth.

The Rohingya crisis must be understood not as a temporary emergency, but as a structurally protracted situation with deep historical roots spanning more than four decades. While repatriation to Myanmar remains the ultimate aspiration for the Rohingya people and the stated goal of the international community, the perspectives of Rohingya youth reveal a deeply rooted and justified fear of returning to a state of persecution. This dynamic undermines policy approaches focused on repatriation timelines. This reality requires a strategic shift in international policy from annual humanitarian relief to long-term, sustainable solutions that address the root causes of despair and instability.

Across extensive consultations, Rohingya refugees, particularly the younger generation, consistently express a deep-seated desire to return to their homeland in Myanmar. This is not a simple wish for relocation but a quest for dignity, identity, and an end to the perpetual dependency that defines life in the camps. The sentiment is not one of settling for a life in exile, rather, it is a clear call for a future where they can be self-sufficient and reclaim their heritage.

This powerful aspiration was articulated by a Rohingya youth leader who stated: “We don’t want to be refugees in this country. We don’t want to be burdens on Bangladesh.”

Delegates heard consistently that the Rohingya do not wish to remain refugees indefinitely. MP Salma Zahid reflected this sentiment following conversations in the camps: “They do not want to be refugees forever. They want to go home. But until then, they deserve education, opportunity, and humanity right here.” Repatriation must remain the long-term goal, while immediate humanitarian and protection needs cannot be deferred.

The aspiration for repatriation is tempered by a rational fear grounded in the ongoing violence and systematic persecution in Myanmar. This is a direct response to credible reports of continued killings, displacement, food shortages, and persecution. For Rohingya youth, many of whom have only known life in a refugee camp, the idea of returning to the land that violently expelled their families is fraught with terror. As one youth participant stated to the delegation: “We are afraid to return to our homeland.”

This fear has crystallized into a clear set of preconditions for any viable repatriation process. The youth are adamant that return must be:

- Safe
- Voluntary
- Dignified
- Based on citizenship recognition and rights

These conditions are a fundamental demand for survival and basic human rights. For this generation, repatriation is meaningless without verifiable security guarantees and the restoration of their legal identity.

While the Myanmar regime has not agreed to provide these conditions to date, during a meeting with the Bangladeshi officials, the delegation learned that there is a verification process that is slowly moving forward, however, there is no credible plan for a safe, voluntary and dignified return.

4. Security, Criminality and Cross-Border Instability

The international community's struggle to forge a political solution, combined with diminishing resources, has directly created a dangerous security vacuum in and around the Rohingya refugee camps. While the security environment is defined by organized crime and regional spillover, the delegation found that the primary fuel for this instability is the collapse of hope among a generation of youth with no future. This despair creates a constant and growing vulnerability among individuals, who are susceptible to recruitment by criminal networks that systematically exploit this vacuum. The delegation's security briefing with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) provided an understanding of these converging threats.

Organized Crime and Narcotics Trade

The camps have become a strategic node in the cross-border narcotics trade. UNDSS briefed the delegation that regional narcotics networks exploit the Cox's Bazar area for transit and concealment, creating serious safety risks for refugees and host communities alike. UNDSS also explained that drug-related offenses represent a significant proportion of reported criminal incidents in Cox's Bazar, including trafficking, smuggling and related violence. These criminal enterprises are a key funding source for armed groups operating in Myanmar, directly linking the insecurity in the camps to the broader regional conflict.

Gang Dynamics and Youth Vulnerability

The 2021 assassination of respected Rohingya leader Mohibullah, who advocated for peaceful repatriation, created a power vacuum that was swiftly filled by multiple criminal gangs. These groups were described by officials as having a narrowly transactional and corrosive purpose, driven solely by profit rather than any social or political vision. Their primary activities revolve around extortion and profiting from the narcotics trade. A key driver of their growth is the recruitment of vulnerable youth who lack any meaningful future. One official emphasized that many of the children who arrived in the camps in 2017 are now young adults with no access to education, employment, or legal pathways forward, creating a pool of vulnerable youth whom criminal networks actively exploit. The delegation was briefed that violence patterns have shifted since late 2024, with fewer daytime confrontations reported in some areas, improving the operating environment for humanitarian services. This remains fragile and reversible.

Human Trafficking Networks

The delegation was briefed on an increasing trend in human trafficking, with the camps serving as a "point of origin" for perilous journeys, primarily by sea to Malaysia. Traffickers and smugglers are often part of the same criminal networks, exploiting the desperation of refugees. The peak period for these dangerous sea voyages is from October to January, when the waters are calmest.

Limited Law Enforcement Capacity

The formal security architecture within the camps is stretched dangerously thin. Security for 33 camps, housing 1.2 million people, is provided by approximately 2,000 personnel from the Armed Police Battalion (APBn), a specialized unit distinct from the regular police. The APBn has limited investigative capacity, and regular policing does not extend into the camps, creating significant gaps in law and order.

Regional Spillover

The instability is compounded by cross-border incidents from the ongoing conflict in Myanmar. These include stray bullets and projectiles entering Bangladeshi territory, as well as landmines that have washed across the border during monsoon seasons, posing a direct threat to both refugees and host communities.

5. A Crisis of Education, Youth, and Mental Health

While the security threats are tangible, the most critical and destabilizing crisis identified by the delegation was the pervasive collapse of hope among Rohingya youth. This sentiment, captured in a delegate's reflection, "The lack of hope... this is what's troubling me," permeated every conversation with refugees. This hopelessness is not an abstract feeling; it is a direct consequence of the systemic denial of education, livelihoods and future prospects for an entire generation, creating a crisis that is arguably more dangerous than the violence perpetrated by criminal gangs.

The education crisis sits at the center of this collapse of hope. Confined to the camps, Rohingya children and youth face severe restrictions on access to education at every level. While the absence of secondary and higher education has long been a source of despair for adolescents and young adults, the delegation learned that the situation has deteriorated further with the scaling back of international funding. Cuts to major donor support, including reductions linked to USAID-funded programming, have resulted in the closure of learning centres, including elementary schools that previously provided basic education to young children.

Rohingya youth lamented that "we have no opportunity to learn higher education." This feeling of stolen potential was captured further by another youth's heartbreaking reflection: "When I go to bed, I see dreams. When I wake up, I lose them." This collective plea for a future was

summarized in a direct appeal to the delegation: “We want to request the Canadian government for access to higher education so we can become a doctor, engineer, pilot.”

A 14-year-old girl, speaking to Senator Ataullahjan, quietly shared her dream of becoming a teacher and her fear that without education, that dream would slip away. “The world has forgotten us,” she said. “We want a future too.”

As a result, even foundational education is no longer guaranteed. Delegates heard from families whose children had been enrolled in learning centres that are now closed, leaving thousands of children without any formal schooling. This regression has had a profound psychological impact on youth and parents alike, reinforcing the perception that each year brings fewer opportunities than the last.

For older youth, the absence of pathways beyond primary education has created a sense of stolen potential. Many described living in a constant tension between aspiration and futility, expressing that dreams of becoming professionals or contributing meaningfully to society feel increasingly out of reach.

This crisis is compounded by severe protection failures, particularly for women and girls. The lack of safety and privacy in overcrowded shelters exposes them to constant risk. They are acutely vulnerable to trafficking, exploitative marriages, and other forms of gender-based violence. As one young woman explained, “There is no safety and security, especially for women, which is why many take risks to go to Malaysia.”

The delegation heard harrowing stories of girls and young women being targeted by traffickers and smugglers. Beyond physical insecurity, the delegation learned that stigma itself has become a major protection risk for women and girls. Tragically, those who return to the camps pregnant after being exploited face “severe stigma and mistreatment within their own community.” Survivors of trafficking or sexual exploitation often return to camps pregnant or traumatized, only to face rejection from family members, intended spouses and their broader community. This social exclusion has led to documented cases of suicide attempts, self-harm and renewed attempts at irregular migration.

This vulnerability is exacerbated by economic pressures; the inability to afford a dowry has also contributed to depression and suicide among young women.¹ As one community member stated bluntly: “Because they don’t have money for dowry, many women are committing suicide in the camp.”

Trafficking emerged repeatedly as what delegates described as a “crisis within a crisis.” MP Sameer Zuberi emphasized that these abuses are symptoms of broader despair: “Trafficking, early marriage, and desperation are symptoms of hopelessness. But we also saw glimpses of

¹ A Record Review on the Health Status of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. (2020). Joarder, T. et al.

hope. We met teenagers who still dream of becoming doctors, teachers, and leaders. We have a responsibility to give life to this hope.”

6. Aid Cuts and Desperation

The impact of declining international aid is a direct accelerant of this human crisis. Shrinking food rations and the closure of essential services are not mere budgetary adjustments; they are drivers of acute protection risks, fueling a vicious cycle of desperation. Rohingya refugees used to receive food baskets worth \$12 per person each month. This has since been cut down to baskets worth \$6 per month, just enough for rice and oil. Youth members described the chronic anxiety created by this reality, stating, "Every year we hear the same thing: rations will be reduced, services will be reduced. Even our basic needs are not enough anymore."

This desperation pushes youth toward "illegal activities and irregular migration" as their only perceived options for survival or escape. When all formal pathways to a future are blocked, the dangerous and informal routes offered by criminals become, for many, the only ones left. While the refugee community confronts this devastating internal crisis, the host nation of Bangladesh is contending with its own immense and growing pressures.

7. Host Community Pressures and Policy Constraints

For over four decades, the Government and people of Bangladesh have demonstrated extraordinary generosity in hosting the world's largest refugee population. This long-standing contribution, however, is now under immense strain from declining international support and significant domestic pressures. These pressures directly shape the government's policies, which, while restrictive, are rooted in legitimate concerns about national security and long-term stability.

A key pressure point is the rising tension with host communities. As international funding for the humanitarian response shrinks, resources become strained. The delegation was briefed on an incident of significant civil unrest that occurred after 1,200 Bangladeshi teaching volunteers lost their jobs due to funding cuts, leading to protests that blocked humanitarian access for two days. The Government of Bangladesh also faces "existential" security concerns, including the very real risks of gun running and a cross-border drug trade flourishing in the camp-adjacent regions.

These pressures have led the Government of Bangladesh to establish firm policy red lines and structural barriers designed to prevent the permanent settlement of the Rohingya population. Based on high-level meetings with government advisors, these constraints include:

- **No Permanent Integration:** The government's position is unequivocal. In senior-level discussions, officials emphasized that Bangladesh does not intend to integrate the Rohingya population into Bangladeshi society and continues to view repatriation as the only acceptable long-term end state.

- **Restrictions on Education:** While acknowledging the importance of basic education, officials conveyed significant caution about expanding access to higher or advanced education. Their concern focused on the absence of clear pathways for educated youth if repatriation remains stalled, and the risk that expanded education could create expectations or pressures for permanent settlement rather than return.
- **Restrictions on Livelihoods:** Current policies prevent refugees from engaging in formal work or selling goods, even after receiving vocational skills training. This structural barrier blocks any path to self-reliance and deepens dependency on a shrinking pool of humanitarian aid.

Bangladeshi civil society leaders stressed that the Rohingya crisis is unfolding amid broader national pressures, including climate-driven displacement, rising child labour, and limited access to basic healthcare. NGOs cited estimates of approximately 15 million people affected by river erosion and climate impacts across Bangladesh, alongside increasing numbers of street children and informal labourers in urban centres.

These intersecting crises help explain Bangladesh's policy caution and underscore the need for international partners, including Canada, to adopt approaches that integrate humanitarian response with longer-term development, resilience and host-community support.

It is for this reason that without viable pathways for the future, such as resettlement or repatriation, the host government views the very tools of hope such as education and livelihoods as potential accelerants of social unrest and permanent integration.

8. The Needs of the Host Community: Parallel Vulnerability and Shared Strain

While the Rohingya crisis understandably commands urgent humanitarian attention, the delegation understands that any sustainable Canadian engagement must address the needs of Bangladesh's host communities alongside those of displaced refugees. The scale and duration of the crisis have placed significant social, economic, and environmental pressure on surrounding communities in Cox's Bazar and beyond.

During the visit, the delegation toured a local school funded by HCI and operated by a Bangladeshi partner organization. The school serves students supported through HCI's sponsorship program as well as children from vulnerable, low-income host-community families. Delegates engaged directly with students and educators, hearing firsthand about the educational gaps facing local children whose families struggle with poverty, irregular employment, and limited access to formal schooling, particularly for girls. Host communities face persistent barriers to quality education, including overcrowded classrooms, limited infrastructure, and financial constraints that force children out of school prematurely.

The delegation also observed the implementation of a mobile medical clinic funded by HCI, serving remote and underserved host-community areas. Through this experience, delegates

witnessed the extent to which many Bangladeshi families rely on non-governmental organizations for access to primary healthcare.

9. The Local NGO Perspective

To understand the operational reality of delivering aid within this constrained environment, the delegation met with leaders from the Bangladeshi non-profit sector. Their testimony highlighted a stark disconnect between the urgent needs on the ground and the structural barriers limiting their response, painting a picture of a dedicated community of practitioners struggling against shrinking funds and worsening conditions.

Participants consistently emphasized that existing humanitarian projects are being scaled back despite no prospect of near-term repatriation. This has led to a deterioration of conditions in the camps, with Rohingya receiving basic relief but unable to participate in any meaningful economic activity that could lead to self-reliance. NGO leaders identified several specific policy barriers that prevent progress and deepen dependency:

- **Education Infrastructure:** Due to severe land scarcity in the camps, NGOs have requested permission to build multi-storey learning centers to accommodate more students. These requests have been consistently denied by the government, leaving thousands of children without access to schooling.
- **Exclusion of Girls:** Citing UNICEF data, one NGO leader reported that approximately 45% of Rohingya girls are not receiving an education. Community demand for girls' education is strong, but the physical space to expand programs does not exist under current policy.
- **Livelihood Blockages:** While NGOs provide valuable skills training, refugees are not allowed to work or sell their products. Furthermore, local Bangladeshi traders are not permitted to enter the camps to purchase goods, creating an economic dead end that stifles any potential for self-sufficiency.

Despite these significant constraints, the delegation witnessed the vital work being done by Canadian-supported organizations to deliver life-saving aid and build resilience.

10. Canada's Role and Reputation

Throughout the delegation, Bangladeshi government officials, civil society leaders and humanitarian partners conveyed a consistent perception of Canada as a credible, principled, and constructive international partner. While Canada is not viewed as a geopolitical actor in shaping repatriation outcomes, it is regarded as a country that engages with integrity, listens carefully, and acts with humanitarian consistency. Canada maintains a positive reputation, and Canadian civil society organizations are recognized for delivering work on the ground. Across multiple sites visited, the delegation observed Canada-identified funding and partnership markers associated with humanitarian programming.

Bangladeshi officials repeatedly emphasized their appreciation for Canada's long-standing commitment to refugee protection, human rights and multilateral cooperation. This reputation was reinforced by Canada's history of welcoming refugees, including Rohingya families, and by the presence of a large and engaged Bengali diaspora in Canadian cities.

Civil society organizations and non-profit leaders highlighted the role of Canadian charities as particularly important in the current environment of global funding fatigue. As international donors scale back or shift priorities, Canadian organizations were described as dependable partners capable of sustaining services, piloting innovative approaches and advocating responsibly. This reinforced Canada's image as a country that does not disengage when crises become protracted.

Importantly, Bangladesh officials appeared to distinguish Canada from other international actors. Canada was not perceived as imposing political conditions or seeking visibility at the expense of host-country realities.

Among the Rohingya, Canada is appreciated for its leadership in humanitarian assistance and official recognition of the genocide. Yet, this goodwill is at risk with shifting global priorities.

11. Engagement with the Government of Bangladesh: Strengthening Bilateral Relations

The delegation engaged in discussions with senior representatives of the Government of Bangladesh regarding the broader Canada–Bangladesh relationship. These meetings reinforced that the Rohingya crisis cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider diplomatic, economic, and strategic partnership between the two countries.

The delegation met with senior officials responsible for foreign affairs, national security and refugee coordination, as well as the Chief Advisor. These discussions provided an opportunity to reaffirm Canada's respect for Bangladesh's sovereignty and its long-standing role as host to the Rohingya population. Officials emphasized the scale of the burden Bangladesh continues to shoulder and the importance of sustained international solidarity.

The delegation underscored Canada's commitment to principled engagement, including support for safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation, continued humanitarian assistance and long-term development cooperation.

Beyond the Rohingya file, officials expressed interest in deepening institutional collaboration between Ottawa and Dhaka. Discussions also addressed the growing economic relationship between Canada and Bangladesh. The delegation acknowledged the importance of strengthening trade ties. The delegation noted that a stable and forward-looking Canada–Bangladesh economic partnership contributes to broader regional stability.

12. The Canadian Response on the Ground

In a constrained and under-resourced environment, Canadian humanitarian relief organizations are essential actors delivering life-saving aid, fostering resilience, and innovating in partnership with global actors. These organizations, exemplified by the work of Human Concern International (HCI), represent a key pillar of Canada's international presence and influence, serving as trusted and effective channels for humanitarian support.

The delegation observed firsthand how HCI, as a prime example of Canadian humanitarian engagement, is implementing a multi-faceted strategy that combines direct service delivery with high-level policy engagement.

Facilitating Policy Dialogue

A senior Bangladeshi official shared that the parliamentary delegation has helped to create a constructive channel for dialogue and relationship-building between Canada and Bangladesh.

Core Service Delivery

The delegation visited several of HCI's direct support programs, witnessing their tangible impact. This included a tour of the **Child Sponsorship Program school in Camp #4**, which provides education to approximately 300 Rohingya children. Delegates also observed HCI's funded OBAT clinic that provides comprehensive primary healthcare services, including preventive, curative, and diagnostic care, with specialized units for maternal care, dental care, and pharmacy services. The delegation also learned about HCI's **mobile medical clinics**, which provide essential health services to remote host communities that would otherwise have no access to care.

Strategic Partnerships and Innovation

HCI has demonstrated a clear strategy of leveraging its on-the-ground presence to build powerful partnerships with major international actors. The delegation visited the OBAT Health Clinic, a comprehensive primary care facility supported by an HCI grant in partnership with international partners. A partnership between HCI and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to counter human trafficking across all 33 camps is an example of a response to one of the most severe protection risks facing the Rohingya.

While these on-the-ground efforts are critical for survival and dignity, their ultimate effectiveness is shaped and constrained by the overarching international diplomatic and funding landscape.

13. International Response

The Rohingya crisis is suffering from a significant and dangerous decline in global attention and resources. This shift is driven by a combination of donor fatigue and the emergence of other

major geopolitical conflicts. It has diverted political capital and humanitarian funding away from what is now perceived as a chronic, unsolvable situation.

Delegates noted that global attention and humanitarian resources have shifted toward newer crises, contributing to donor fatigue and reduced visibility for the Rohingya response. This has created a severe humanitarian funding crisis that directly impacts the delivery of essential services like food, healthcare and education on the ground.

This waning attention is compounded by geopolitical constraints that prevent a durable solution. During a high-level briefing, the delegation was informed that a United Nations peacekeeping mission ("blue helmets") to ensure a safe environment for repatriation is not considered a viable option, a decision made by the UN Security Council. A senior Bangladeshi advisor stated that a resolution is impossible without the cooperation of key regional powers.

This combination of waning international focus and deep-seated diplomatic gridlock necessitates a focused, strategic and renewed Canadian engagement to prevent a further slide into instability and despair.

14. Summary of Key Findings

Based on direct observation, expert briefings, and testimony from Rohingya refugees, the parliamentary delegation reached the following core conclusions:

1. **The Crisis is Structurally Protracted, Not Temporary.** The crisis is structurally protracted, meaning an annual short-term relief model is not only insufficient but strategically unsound, as it fails to address the underlying drivers of instability.
2. **The Collapse of Hope is the Primary Destabilizing Factor.** The pervasive hopelessness among refugees, driven by a systemic lack of future prospects, is a greater immediate threat to stability than inter-gang violence. It is the primary driver of risky irregular migration, acute mental health crises, and vulnerability to exploitation.
3. **The Education Gap is the Most Urgent Protection Failure.** The systemic lack of access to secondary and higher education is creating a "lost generation." It was the single most pressing concern voiced by Rohingya youth, who see education as their only pathway to a dignified future.
4. **Humanitarian Funding Cuts Are a Direct Threat Multiplier.** Reductions in aid for food, health, and education are not passive budget adjustments; they actively increase refugee vulnerability to human trafficking, criminal recruitment, and other forms of exploitation by deepening desperation.
5. **Host Country Policies, While Restrictive, Are Shaped by Real Pressures.** Bangladesh's constraints on livelihoods and formal education are rooted in legitimate national security concerns and the immense strain of hosting over a million refugees with diminishing international support. A durable solution requires acknowledging and addressing these pressures.

6. **Canadian Civil Society is a Vital Strategic Asset.** On-the-ground Canadian organizations are critical. For example, organizations such as Human Concern International continue to deliver life-saving services. However, due to the recent geopolitical shifts and reduction in international attention, Rohingya refugees are increasingly dependent on aid from such organizations.

15. Recommendations for Renewed Canadian Engagement

To the Government of Canada, the delegation submits that the findings of this mission demand a renewed and strategic approach. The following recommendations are designed to be pragmatic, impactful and aligned with Canada's established role as a global leader in human rights, refugee protection, and humanitarian action.

1. Stabilize Humanitarian Support and Champion Protection

To prevent the security and protection crisis from accelerating further, Canada must first stabilize the operating environment by protecting its funding commitments for the Rohingya humanitarian response. Within this, Canada should prioritize programs that address acute protection risks for women and girls. This includes championing and supporting community-based initiatives like the comprehensive counter-trafficking strategy being operationalized by HCI and the IOM, which provides a scalable model for prevention and survivor support.

2. Establish Dedicated GAC Funding Streams for Canadian Organizations on the Ground

To enhance effectiveness, continuity, and accountability in protracted crises such as the Rohingya response, Global Affairs Canada should, renew multi-year funding programs in partnership with Canadian partners. Dedicated funding streams would allow Canadian organizations to sustain essential services during periods of global funding volatility, prevent abrupt program closures such as the shutdown of learning centres, and invest in longer-term protection, education and resilience initiatives.

3. Invest in Education as a Lifeline for the Next Generation

As the single most effective counter-narrative to the hopelessness that fuels criminality, Canada should become a global champion for expanding educational opportunities for Rohingya youth. This requires diplomatically advocating for and directly funding initiatives that provide access to secondary, post-secondary, and vocational skills training. Priority should be given to supporting "portable skills" models, which provide youth with hope and tangible capabilities that are valuable regardless of their future location, thereby aligning with the host government's preference to avoid creating incentives for permanent integration.

4. Expand Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

Canada should expand its targeted resettlement program for Rohingya refugees, recognizing that this remains a critical protection tool for individuals at extreme risk.

5. Re-Energize Diplomatic and Multilateral Action

Canada must re-assert its diplomatic leadership on the Rohingya file. This should include strengthening multilateral pressure on Myanmar to create conditions for safe and dignified repatriation, deepening engagement with key regional actors, and ensuring high-level Canadian representation at critical international forums. Canada should also explore non-traditional diplomatic channels, including engaging with states like Qatar, which have a track record of mediation, to identify new avenues for dialogue with Myanmar and key regional stakeholders.

16. The Role of Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group in Sustaining Momentum

The Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group has a critical and ongoing role to play in ensuring the Rohingya crisis remains a Canadian foreign policy priority. Through oversight, advocacy, and legislative action, parliamentarians can hold the government accountable to its commitments and ensure that the voices of the Rohingya are not forgotten. The momentum generated by this delegation must be translated into sustained parliamentary engagement.

To that end, the delegation has committed to the following concrete next steps:

- **Co-sponsor a briefing on Parliament Hill** for all Members of Parliament and Senators, using the findings of this report to build cross-party awareness and consensus for renewed Canadian action.
- **Recommend that relevant standing committees**, including the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights undertake a focused study on Canada's long-term strategy for the Rohingya crisis.

This work is essential in ensuring that Canada's response continues to be part of a coherent, long-term strategy grounded in our country's deepest values.

17. Conclusion

The collapse of hope has become the primary driver of instability, threatening to consume a generation of Rohingya youth and unravel the stability of the world's largest refugee settlement. The pressures of international neglect, geopolitical deadlock, and organized crime are creating a reality where desperation is the main currency.

While the path to a durable solution is complex, the costs of inaction are a lost generation, deepening regional instability and the erosion of human dignity. The Rohingya people are not asking for permanent dependency; they are asking for the tools of hope and the international solidarity needed to one day return home in safety and with dignity.

Canada has a proud history of stepping forward when principled leadership is needed most. This is one of those moments. Renewed Canadian engagement is not simply an act of charity,

but a strategic and necessary defense of the principles of human rights, justice, and international responsibility. These principles form the core of Canada's identity on the world stage. It is time to lead again.

Senator Salma Ataullahjan emphasized the moral dimension of Canada's engagement: "Bangladesh has done what few countries would. It opened its borders, its land, and its heart. But it cannot do this alone. We owe it to both the host country and the Rohingya people to step up." This visit reinforced the need for Canada to remain visibly engaged, principled and responsive to both humanitarian realities and geopolitical constraints.

