

The Myanmar Problem: Testimonial Injustice in ASEAN's Non-Interference and the Rohingya Genocide

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Abstract

The Rohingya genocide in Myanmar represents the most severe mass atrocity in recent Southeast Asian history. Despite the catastrophic nature of the massacre, however, ASEAN's principle of non-interference has greatly constrained diplomatic regional response and intervention. This paper argues that ASEAN's non-interference framework has operated as a tool perpetuating testimonial injustice, systematically silencing Rohingya testimonies from being heard and acted upon in regional diplomatic spaces. Such systemic silencing subsequently reinforces a double marginalization: the Rohingya are not merely repudiated of their humanitarian and citizenship rights within Myanmar but are also denied epistemic justification and recognition. Using Miranda Fricker's framework of testimonial injustice where a speaker's credibility is deflated on the basis of identity-based prejudice, this paper examines how international structural principles have been instrumentalized to obscure state-perpetrated violence. Examining the intersection of human rights, regional politics, and international norms, this paper reveals how institutional mechanisms can propagate testimonial injustice vis-à-vis credibility deficits. Ultimately, this paper concludes with an analysis of possible pathways that balances concerns over sovereignty with appropriate alternative frameworks that safeguard the lived experiences and testimonies of vulnerable populations.