

AÑRÁ ROHINGYA (We are Rohingya): Corporealizing Rohingya resistance through digital and art-based activism

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Abstract

Since its coup d'état in 1962, the Burmese military regime has stoked a "slow-burning genocide" against the Rohingya, an ethnoreligious minority from the Arakan/Rakhine region of Myanmar/Burma. Catalyzed by militant resistance in 2016, the government rained violence and destruction on Rohingya communities, leaving hundreds of villages burned, tens of thousands dead, and over a million Rohingya displaced internationally and internally. Scholars, journalists, and humanitarian organizations were quick to diagnose Rohingya existence as crisis, perpetuating a narrative of helpless victims caught in an endless spiral of multidimensional, global catastrophe.

In an age where digital space is contested political terrain, Rohingya activists are utilizing social media platforms and visual art-based mediums as sites of resistance that consolidate voice, collective memory, culture, and political agency. Collaborating with a primary Rohingya activist collective based in Kutupalong Refugee Camp in Bangladesh, this study blends social media discourse analysis, photo/art-voice, and semi-structured interviews with Rohingya activists to understand and undergird the ways these modes of Rohingya resistance counter victimizing narratives, build transnational solidarities, and situate the Rohingya as political subjects. This research centers the lived and living experiences of Rohingya communities as active shapers of their realities, who cultivate spaces and rituals of healing, care, solidarity, activism and advocacy through digital platforms and creative praxis arcing toward better and just futures.