

Statelessness and the Rohingyas: Constructing and Contesting Diaspora Identity on Social Media platforms

Since the 1970s, decades of military dictatorship, interethnic conflict, and brutality have caused a massive Rohingya exodus from Myanmar. While neighbouring Bangladesh remains the major destination hosting over a million Rohingya, a sizable community has emerged in other South-East Asian countries and in pockets of Australia, Europe and North America in recent years. Today, the vast majority of nearly three million Rohingya population are in exile to escape state-sponsored human rights violations and systematic persecution in Myanmar. In this context, bringing together issues at the crossroads of forced migration, statelessness, online connectivity and the quest for identity, the study proposes to examine the role of various digital platforms in forming and shaping Rohingya diaspora identity among the stateless Rohingyas. The proposed research aims to unpack to what extent digital platforms constitute a space for digital togetherness, where statelessness, diasporic experiences and Rohingya identities are constructed, contested, and mediated. By highlighting recurring themes and patterns of engagement on these web-based platforms, the research aims to look at how diasporic civic and political e-activisms are transforming the very contours of Rohingya identity formation and their pursuit of recognition. In recognising the role of online platforms in addressing a variety of offline constraints, the study also aims to reveal a quintessential global North-South gap among the Rohingya diaspora. Finally, focusing on such a creative constellation of socio-cultural and political issues in virtual space, the research will also demonstrate how the exiled Rohingyas practice a politics of resistance and recognition while confronting the policy pretensions of Myanmar's government.