Myanmar Government's Response to the Emergency Condition of Humanity and Health Crisis in the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Article Information	Abstract
	The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar is still ongoing today, especially humanitarian and health problems suffered by ethnic Rohingya. Myanmar government's lack of response in resolving this humanitarian crisis is already a concern to the whole world. The lack of existing health facilities for ethnic Rohingya especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has the potential to cause new health problems, is a complex issue that must be responded to with appropriate policies by the Government of Myanmar. Resolving inter-ethnic conflicts together with overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic is a major task of the Government of Myanmar. Equitable the disbursement of aid funds from the Myanmar government and public awareness to maintain health protocols are crucial to dealing with the conflict amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to see how the Myanmar government responds to the humanitarian and health crisis emergency in the COVID-19 pandemic. This research uses a qualitative method of case study with analytical descriptive. This research uses a conflict resolution management approach that must be completed by the Government of Myanmar.

I. INTRODUCTION

Burma/Myanmar is a country directly bordering Thailand, Laos, and Bangladesh. On July 23, 1997, Burma became an ASEAN member, so indirectly, it was involved in ASEAN's vision to maintain a peaceful, safe, stable, and prosperous Southeast Asia region [1]. However, the social conditions of Burma are still turbulent ethnic minorities. In Burma-Myanmar itself there are 135 ethnic minorities, but the United Nations assigns the most persecuted ethnic to the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity. This ethnicity has been discriminated against since Britain's separation of Buddhist and Muslim ethnicities in the Rakhine region. Under the leadership of the Myanmar military, the Rohingya were denied citizenship, education rights, decent work and land rights due to the emergence of a new policy in 1982 called the Burma Citizenship Law (BCL), which eliminated these rights [2]. At that time, the Rohingya ethnicity did not have citizenship but was designated as temporary residents so that they did not have full citizenship rights by the ruling regime. The BCL law has recognized eight races and 130 ethnic groups but rejects 800 thousand Rohingya Muslims. The absence of recognition of citizenship makes Rohingya ethnic groups increasingly subject to discrimination. Since receiving repressive action, Rohingya Muslims have sought refuge in several countries that directly border Burma-Myanmar, especially Bangladesh with stateless people status

[3]. In 2019 a lawsuit for genocide committed by Myanmar against ethnic Rohingya was filed by Gambia to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as a result of the brutal attacks carried out by the Myanmar military on ethnic Rohingya in 2017 which caused more than 730,000 Rohingya residents to flee [4]. Member of the UN fact-finding mission, Radhika Coomaraswamy, conveyed that the condition of Rohingya refugees who are in Bangladesh is in inappropriate camps and is even threatened with forced repatriation due to overcrowded conditions. He also added that the root of this problem lies in the unclear citizenship status of the ethnicity. It should be, before being returned to Myanmar, the Rohingya ethnicity must first get clarity regarding their citizenship status [5].

During a situation of inter-ethnic conflict, Burma still has to face ill-health problems. According to data published from the Global Health Security Index Myanmar gets an index score on a scale of 20.0 out of 100.0 on the indicator of health capacity in the field of health facilities [6]. Another health threat emerged, when the first case of coronavirus Disease 2019 was found in Wuhan, China. With a total population of around 54 million, Burma reported its first case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on March 24, 2020 [7]. Although the level of spread is lower than that of other ASEAN member countries, public panic is still increasing due to the low number of mass tests to detect sufferers who are also slow in the country. Burma's health system is still classified as poor and is considered incapable of dealing with the turmoil of the pandemic that has occurred. The United Nations (UN) plans to provide as many as 50,000 test kits to Burma. In this case, low-income people are the most vulnerable group due to the health and economic crisis that occurred as a result of the pandemic [8].

From the explanation above, the writer wants to explain the situation that occurs due to ethnic problems and the global health crisis. During the unresolved conflict, how will the Burmese-Myanmar government respond to the emergency due to the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic? This paper tries to describe the current government's response to the COVID-19 problem, which has an impact on various sectors of life. First, we will explain the current condition of Burma-Myanmar. Including a state of conflict that has not subsided. Next, we try to explain the situation of Burma-Myanmar during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the response provided by the local government.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The first journal related to this research is a journal article written by Claudia Auer entitled Conceptualizing Political Crisis and the Role of Public Diplomacy in Crisis Communication Research in 2016 which was published in the journal The Handbook of International Crisis Communication Research [9]. In this article, the author tries to provide the concept of crisis management by providing an explanation of political crises based on literacy reviews and definitions of actors, as well as examining literacy about crisis communication that focuses on the communication strategies of political actors, underlining the findings of International Crisis Behavior (ICB), namely projects on crisis management from a country. Until finding the neglected relationship, namely about crisis communication with public diplomacy.

The author explains the definition of a political

crisis as a situation in which political entities perceive a higher than usual threat of one or more prioritized "core values" and a limited time in response to changes in behaviour by other entities. This can be in the form of economic status, territoriality, political regime, recognition of existence, including ideology or interests that can also trigger military battles. Furthermore, the authors also provide a statement from the ICB regarding a country's crisis management techniques, namely using negotiation, adjudication, arbitration, mediation, non-military sanctions, military threats, threat verbal without violence to acts of violence. According to the author, some of these things carry a communicative message in terms of perspective communication. But primarily, negotiation and mediation can be classified as a crisis communication strategy. Auer illustrates the conceptual similarity of crisis communication to public diplomacy. Both have the same goal to improve or enhance the image and/or resolve conflicts and crises in order to achieve peace and stability. This can be characterized as a strategic communication effort.

Meanwhile, public diplomacy is a technique of crisis management that can help prevent crisis escalation through activities that provide understanding values to the public to avoid disunity. Public diplomacy functions as a sustainable crisis management technique from all phases of a crisis, this supports cooperation in development which aims to produce understanding as well as an effort to build a good image, and reach the public at large; therefore public diplomacy supports crisis communication strategies and traditional diplomacy. This article provides an explanation of the crisis management of a country using public diplomacy. Later,

The second journal related to this research is a journal article written by Syarifatul Ula title The Role of Non-State Actors in International Relations: A Human Rights Watch Case Study in the Humanitarian Crisis in Myanmar in 2017 which is contained in Journal of International Relations, Volume 3, Number 3, Year 2017. In this article, the author describes the involvement of non-state actors in handling the humanitarian crisis that occurred in Myanmar. This article explains the humanitarian crisis and provides an overview of the roles of actors involved in efforts to resolve conflicts.

In the case explanation, the author provides an overview of the role played by Human Rights Watch (HRW) as a non-state actor in its efforts to resolve conflicts. The efforts made by HRW in case involvement as an international institution have a position to attract the attention of the international community to the problems that occur. Furthermore, Ula also explained how the failure of HRW to involve the Myanmar government in solving cases so that non-government actors only have the scope to move on to advocate the community for human rights violations that have occurred. This article explains that conflict resolution efforts also involve non-state actors but have not yet been able to resolve cases. The elements involved lack bargaining power in making conflict resolution policies.

The third journal related to this research is a journal article written by A. Aco Agus, Muhammad Haidir, Sudirman title The Role of NGOs in Strengthening Global Citizen Engagement in Responding to the Global Human Rights Crisis in 2020 which is loaded in Journal of Thought and Research on Social Sciences, Law, and Teaching [10]. This article describes the involvement of the global community in conflict

conditions that occur in the international world. Through campaigns from the non-governmental organization (NGO) actors, the global community can be actively involved in solving problems.

This article provides an overview of the author about the social conditions that occur globally when in a state of conflict. The linkages of the international community in humanitarian aid are adhered to by NGOs that function as mediators and facilitators of the humanitarian disaster that occurs. The role of NGOs in conflict involvement fosters civic engagement through program initiatives to generate social capital that can manifest humanitarian empathy for the international community towards the ongoing conflict. Although they cannot directly resolve conflicts, social capital can be used to help fulfil the human rights of civilians who have been directly affected by armed war. This applies when an armed conflict occurs in Rohingya; civilians are still entitled to guarantee their human rights. For this reason, international solidarity can be built between elements of the global community to help affected people get their human rights. This article is referred to as additional literature on the social response of the global community to conflicts that occur in the international world.

III. ANALYSIS

It is estimated that there are 1.4 million Rohingya Muslims who have spread throughout the world, but the majority are in Myanmar, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan. In the past, the Rohingya Muslims were known as Arakan Muslims. Rohingya Muslims have inhabited Myanmar in Rakhine State for more than 500 years. From the beginning of the British colonial era to the Japanese, Rohingya Muslims lived separately. Until Myanmar's independence in 1948, the Rohingya continued to accept discrimination and were not recognized as ethnic groups of the Myanmar state. Yet according to history, they have lived since the 7th century before the Myanmar state was founded. The Rohingya have received discriminatory treatment for decades, especially since the 1940s. They are oppressed, killed, raped, and alienated by the state, government, and even fellow residents of different ethnicities and religions with the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity. Many of them are not recognized as citizenship status, and they do not get the rights they deserve [11].

The Rohingya ethnic conflict has attracted the world's attention even though this is an internal conflict, and its impact can be felt by neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and so on. Myanmar government does not recognize citizenship status for people of the Rohingya ethnicity. This is evident from the issuance of the Burma Citizenship Law 1982 where it is a list of main ethnicities and minor ethnicities in Myanmar that does not include Rohingya as one of the ethnic lists. This gradually led to various conflicts that occurred so that many of the Rohingya ethnic people who fled to flee Myanmar. The issue of citizenship status is considered the main factor was triggering the conflict. Because of this, the Rohingya Muslims are often the object of discrimination. Violence against ethnic minorities, in this case, the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity, who is of a different religion from the Buddhist majority ethnicity, is the result of the discriminatory policies carried out by the government of the State of Myanmar. The government implements a policy of forced assimilation and does not recognize the status of Rohingya

Muslims as part of the Myanmar nation and clearly states that these ethnicities are not citizens of Myanmar [12].

Amnesty International has noted that various forms of atrocities committed against ethnic Rohingya Muslims which includes the refusal to recognize citizenship status, restrictions on space to move places, restrictions on economic activities, restrictions in education, murder, detention, torture, abuse towards women, and limiting marriage, also the anti-Muslim Rohingya riots. One of Amnesty International's researchers, Benyamin Zawacki stated that "For too long the human rights record in Myanmar has been tarnished, this is due to the deprivation of citizenship to the Rohingya and the discrimination they continue to receive". The Myanmar military government in 1988 through the State Peace and Development Council implemented its policy of Burmanization. SPDC considers that Burmanization is different from communalization because Burmese ethnic are the majority, while cultures and religions that do not originate from Burma are foreign cultures and religions.

Muslims in Myanmar are seen as foreigners because they practice a way of life that is different from Myanmar people in general. Muslims practice foreign ways that are anti to the indigenous culture of Burma. Until 2014, refugees from the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity still did not get their right to full recognition as Myanmar citizens. Many of them become boat people who sail the seas looking for asylum all the way to Christmas Island, Australia. Apart from not recognizing citizenship, the Myanmar government discriminates against the Rohingya Muslim ethnic minority, eliminating economic rights, changing the names of existing Islamic historical buildings, and declaring that the Rohingya Muslims are

ethnic Bengalis. The main motivation of the Myanmar government in carrying out the persecution of ethnic Rohingya Muslims is to prevent the Rohingya Muslim ethnic who are currently displaced from returning to their country of Myanmar [13].

Armed conflict is still ongoing in Myanmar. It was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak which was announced for the first time entering Myanmar since March 24, 2020. Various international organizations are calling for a ceasefire to armed groups both from ethnic groups and from the Myanmar military who are still involved in dangerous conflicts even amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Complying with health protocols during a conflict such as social distancing is not a top priority in ethnic conflict areas in Myanmar. Inadequate medical care, restrictions on movement due to conflicts and pandemics, and difficult access to meet logistical needs must be faced by residents in conflict areas. Although the Myanmar government has stated that it will try to deal with the Covid-19 outbreak in all parts of the country, the Myanmar military continues to intensify attacks in seven states in Myanmar, which are inhabited by Rohingya Muslims, especially in the Rakhine, Chin, and Karen areas.

In various states that are currently in conflict, the government and the military will directly increase the chances of transmitting the virus due to the massive military invasion of society and neglecting to hold a ceasefire as called for by various international organizations including the United Nations. In approximately 15 villages in the state of Karen, residents are threatened with having to evacuate and flee because of the conflict that is heating up in these areas. Citizens are more afraid and worried about attacks from the Myanmar military than the Covid-19 pandemic which also threatens their lives. In northern Rakhine state,

the Arakan army is currently involved in an armed conflict with the Myanmar military. It was reported by the Rakhine Ethnic Congress that approximately 164,000 people were displaced by the end of April 2020.

On April 29, 2020, the United Nations envoy assigned to Myanmar, Yanghee Lee called for an investigation into the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Myanmar that occurred in Rakhine and Chin states. While the world is battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the Myanmar military has continued to intensify attacks in Rakhine state targeting civilians. Eighteen ambassadors from foreign countries to Myanmar also called for an end to armed conflict and focus on protecting vulnerable groups of people from being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Myanmar government, through the Covid-19 Committee announced that it is working together to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic amid the ongoing armed conflict. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is deemed unable to change the state of the ongoing conflict in various regions.

It is feared that the millions of dollars sourced from the assistance of various international organizations aimed at assisting the Government of Myanmar in handling Covid-19 in Myanmar are not sufficient for the needs needed. The World Bank has also agreed to provide a credit of 50 million US dollars to help handle Covid-19 in Myanmar. However, much of the funds are used and focused on intensive care in Yangon, which is the epicentre of the Covid-19 outbreak in Myanmar, and care for areas outside Yangon has not received enough attention. Refugee camps which are also prone to Covid-19 transmission have not received much -

attention. They are even trying to implement Covid-19 prevention measures by keeping a distance and also checking body temperature for passing residents. They also created an isolation center for residents who are indicated to have been infected with the Covid-19 virus.

Many reports from various international organizations working in the field of human rights prove that there have been serious human rights violations in Myanmar which made many Rohingya people flee their country because they feel insecure. Myanmar is under pressure from various parties to admit the crimes it has committed. With this pressure, Myanmar will be hampered in international relations, and force it to take action on the problems that occur against the Rohingya ethnicity.

Myanmar made a transition to democracy as one of the ways to resolve this conflict. A rapid transition has been made in Myanmar's government system and reconstructing the world view of violence perpetrated against the Rohingya. Negative peace, which was created by the Myanmar government to ease the humanitarian conflict that has caught the world's attention, seems to assuage various issues that have developed regarding the mistakes committed by the Myanmar government. However, the Rohingya have not fully felt true peace because there are still many human rights violations that have not been fully resolved by the Myanmar government.

The religious and ethnic conflicts that have occurred against the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity, which have gradually occurred over the past few decades, have dragged ethnic and religious identities as the basis of resistance. This conflict involved masses from a minority group, namely the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group, with the Burmese Buddhist

majority group. The involvement of religious issues in this conflict has proven to increase the potential for violence through identity-building so that it is easy to mobilize the masses. It is felt that there is a need for the role of the leader of the majority, in this case, moderate monks, to invite to a peaceful path through interfaith negotiations and dialogue. There is also a need for a neutral third party whose role is to bring together the conflicting parties. So far, it has often been argued that by granting citizenship status to Rohingya Muslims, this conflict will reduce, but not only with that. The government must revoke policies that discriminate against Muslims, especially the Rohingya Muslim ethnicity, strengthen the economy and development in order to create political and economic stability, and the need to rebuild relations between religious groups through reconciliation measures so that the people of Myanmar are reunited.

The pandemic that has been going on since the beginning of this year has spread widely throughout the world, with approximately 155 countries suffering from the Covid-19 virus. All countries have the opportunity or possibility to catch the virus, especially with the international aviation factor that continued before this pandemic began. However, while other countries either those who have reported their first cases or have not detected the virus have moved to take precautionary measures for their communities, on the contrary, the Myanmar government has stated that there are no Covid-19 cases. This claim was stated in a speech on March 16, 2020, and stated that there were no cases detected because of the healthy lifestyle of the Myanmar people so there was no infection (Robertson, 2020). However, this claim can be attributed to the fact that the virus can spread regardless of borders and Myanmar itself

is in a vulnerable position with its proximity to China and other countries on the Myanmar border such as Bangladesh, India, and Thailand, which have reported cases of Covid. -19 in their respective countries.

Since March 24, 2020, when the first cases were reported, even though Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, they are still trying to take precautions for the virus infection. As of June 26, 2020, in the Covid-19 Myanmar monitoring data, it was stated that there were 71,692 laboratory tests, 5,878 people under monitoring (ODP), 216 patients recovered, and 6 patients died [14]. Various policies have been established by the government following recommendations from organizations such as WHO and UN. The policy begins by limiting the number of people gathering to a maximum of five people to implement social distancing, examinations such as rapid tests have also begun to be carried out in hospitals, temporarily stopping the issuance of visas and domestic and international flights, and quarantine [15].

The quarantine that has been recommended by the government has been going on for a long time in Myanmar, and according to the government, the people of Myanmar are encouraged to implement a community quarantine rather than lockdown as has been done by several countries in European parts such as Italy and France. Why doesn't Myanmar have the choice to implement lockdown like Europe? Although as we know the satisfactory results can be seen from the implementation of the lockdown, both from the initial aim to reduce the number of cases and the spread of the virus, and to improve the surrounding environment, using lockdowns is not an easy thing to do for Myanmar.

According to the 2017 Living Conditions Survey, it is stated that 24.8% of Myanmar's population is classified as poor and 32.9% will be vulnerable to falling into poverty from unexpected things, and only around 37% or around 1.45 million people are in Social Security Board social health protection from the government [16]. It can be concluded that by implementing lockdowns, the community will feel hardship with the possibility of their job being lost and income that cannot be obtained, while around 62% of Myanmar's population does not have savings to deal with disasters or cases like Covid. Meanwhile, for people in remote areas, apart from the main problems that have been discussed, what is more, worrying is the specific logistics for lockdown such as clean water and food for their daily lives. Although the lockdown is considered to be more effective, the central government of Myanmar prefers self-quarantine to ensure that the country's economic conditions do not immediately fall down and ensure that people can still interact with their communities, thus forming chat groups on several social media to help those who are either working at the forefront or those who still have to work to meet their needs, or communities who are expected to implement quarantine to reduce the spread of the virus.

Knowing that there are limitations in various matters, from logistics to quarantine, the number of doctors and nurses, and such facilities in hospitals, the government has made existing policies more stringent. The government establishes a curfew where people are not allowed to carry out activities outside of 22.00 at night to 04.00 am. For those who violate, a sanction has been put in place and the majority of the violators of the rule end up in prison temporarily. The responsible apparatus also did not

hesitate to impose these sanctions, from adults to small children, which resulted in the number of citizens who had to carry out the imprisonment sanctions which were considered to exceed their capacity and could have a fatal impact. According to Human Rights Watch director, Phil Robertson, "Limiting public health risks through social distancing is crucial, but jailing people for being outside at night only adds to the risk for everyone.", "Putting hundreds of people in crowded and unhygienic prisons beats the initial goal of fighting Covid-19 itself " [17]. Seeing nearly 500 people who have to spend from one month to a year behind bars, the Myanmar government has received a lot of criticism for their good intentions in tackling the pandemic.

Although strict government actions and policies can be considered active in overcoming this pandemic, what is very unfortunate is that these attitudes and policies are only applied to the big cities that are the center of the country. Minorities or ethnic minorities as discussed have received less attention from the central government regarding the response to Covid-19. Apart from the lack of attention from the government, injustice can be seen from the different responses of the government for some regions. The grants received by the government, which was initially intended for residents in remote areas such as Rakhine and Chin were not fully or not channelled from the central government. Where they really need these funds based on facts such as in an open-air camp in Rakhine, one toilet there is shared for 40 people at once and access to clean water is very limited [18].

A significant comparison can be seen in conditions during the pandemic in central and remote areas or cities that are filled with refugees and minorities. Big cities restrict activity and interaction outside the home while remote areas

continue to face attacks from the Arakan Army and Myanmar military. The government's desire to flatten the curve can be realized in areas such as Mandalay and Yangon, but for areas or villages such as Rakhine and Chin, it is more likely for residents to live in their own homes [19]. The ongoing pandemic does not constitute an opportunity or possibility for the attack from the army to stop even temporarily, especially with a history where the agreement regarding the attack has never reached a decision. Apart from the lack of funds and facilities, which is very worrying for these regions and villages is their knowledge of Covid-19 itself. This may have been driven by online blackouts that occurred in areas dominated by Rohingya [20]. With blackout itself, minorities cannot know about the condition of Covid-19 itself, and thus they do not have awareness and fear about the virus and cannot prevent it. From several examples of central government responses, it can be seen that government policies and actions are more concerned with central regions and they are still not worried about minorities and raising the internet blackouts which can have a fatal impact on these citizens. The central government has been working to control this pandemic, but several policies still have a negative and unfair impact on some residents so that many residents take preventive actions on their own initiative.

IV. CONCLUSION

Burma-Myanmar has become a country vulnerable to a pandemic due to the country's weak health system. This is exacerbated by the situation of local ethnic conflicts which are still ongoing. The Rohingya case is in the public spotlight internationally and the matter remains unsolved. In fact, the issue of ethnic warfare has received special attention at the international court over the genocide lawsuit filed by the Government of Myanmar by one of the small countries in Africa, Gambia. This case continues as a matter of law and human rights. Rohingya ethnicity as citizens without citizenship also received special attention. This status makes the Rohingya ethnic homeless and even discriminated against and fled to various countries in the world, especially Bangladesh. The next problem arises due to the overcrowding of the refugee camps that make them less livable. This situation adds to the vulnerability of the local population. Fear of repressive to discriminatory measures has led the Rohingya ethnic group to continue to occupy the increasingly full camp.

The humanitarian crisis that occurred as a result of the armed war was exacerbated by the arrival of a pandemic situation. The condition of the refugee camp cannot fulfil the health protocol for the implementation of physical distancing or other health procedures. However, the Myanmar government system as a whole has taken the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic seriously. The capital city of Yangon, which is considered the epicenter of the spread of COVID-19, has received special attention from the local government. There are also strict sanctions in place to prevent the spread of the virus from becoming more widespread. This policy sanction can be in the form of imprisonment. Sanctions that have been emphasized by the government are an effort made to balance the insufficient resources. The government's focus in dealing with the pandemic is still centered on the capital city of Yangon, as a result of which the potential for patient deaths in the regions continues to increase. The disbursement of aid funds has not been leveled and is still concentrated in the epicenter area only. The social response of the community in the regions helps

control with the initiatives of local residents.

In the midst of this situation, the Myanmar Army continues to carry out armed operations so that the pandemic problem is no longer the main fear for residents in conflict areas. Inequality in policies, resource management and conflict and crisis management are still a big task for local governments. In such a situation, Myanmar is one of the countries that is quite vulnerable in the ASEAN region, because it not only experiences a health crisis that is also experienced by countries in the world but, it also has vulnerability due to ongoing armed conflicts. The government's response to tightening regulations regarding health protocols during the pandemic is proof of Myanmar's seriousness in protecting the health of its citizens. However, the authors see that there is a need for further steps towards Myanmar's problems regarding the armed conflict that has occurred.

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