

Speakers: Bangladesh should respond positively to ICC's request

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Human rights and criminal justice experts at an international seminar on Rohingya crisis in Dhaka on Monday. Mehedi Hasan/Dhaka Tribune

Bangladesh should respond to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) request for the country's observations on the matter of the court's jurisdiction over the Rohingya crisis, and submit the relevant documents to aid the process, human rights and criminal justice experts said on Monday.

Discussing the issue at an international seminar titled “Accountability: ICC and the Rohingya Crisis,” speakers also highlighted some key issues that the Bangladesh government should address in its response.

The event, jointly organized by the Centre for Genocide Studies of Dhaka University, the Centre for Peace and Justice of Brac University, and ActionAid Bangladesh, took place at the Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University.

In April, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda asked the court’s judges to rule on whether the ICC “can exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh.”

Earlier in May, the ICC asked Bangladesh for its observations on the matter, saying the country had been “affected by the events concerning the alleged deportation of Rohingya people from Myanmar.”

The ICC requested the Bangladesh government to submit written observations on the issue by June 11. Bangladesh has yet to respond.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, international relations expert and director, Centre for Genocide Studies, suggested that Bangladesh respond positively to the ICC, adding that doing so would not impact the Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations.

Urging the government to respond positively to the ICC's request, Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said: “The legal matters are complex, and it's going to be a long dragged out process, but we are talking about people here; they must be put in the centre. We urge the Government of Bangladesh to make the submission by the deadline. There are technicalities [regarding the documentation], but even the victims have made a submission, so nothing can stop us.”

Hundreds of Rohingyas, victims of the military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state that began in August 2017 and forced to cross over to Bangladesh, appealed to the ICC judges to grant prosecutors jurisdiction to investigate deportations from Myanmar to Bangladesh, Reuters reported on May 31.

