

# SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The World This Week



## ICJ RULES ON ATTACKS ON ROHINGYA

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## THE GAMBIA TAKES MYANMAR TO COURT OVER GENOCIDE

The Gambia's Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou has taken Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, over allegations that the Myanmar military has been committing mass genocide against the Rohingya people in Myanmar. Mr Tambadou is taking on the Nobel laureate in an attempt to prevent further genocide against the Rohingya.

Mr Tambadou visited Cox's Bazar, a small city in Bangladesh, near the border with Myanmar. Thousands of Muslim Rohingya have been forced to flee Buddhist Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh, after military and civilians began a series of systematic attacks against the Rohingya in 2016.

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In 2017, Mr Tambadou visited Myanmar as one of his first official duties as Justice Minister. During the visit, Mr Tambadou heard stories of survivors living in the small city.

Mr Tambadou has stated that his decision to take Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, to the international court, was partially due to his close involvement with the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Mr Tambadou was a prosecutor at the UN's Rwanda tribunal, which was established to determine the people responsible for the genocide of more than 800,000 Tutsi Rwandans. Any of the 149 signatories of the UN Genocide Convention could theoretically have taken Myanmar to court. However, it was The Gambia, under the leadership of Mr Tambadou and with the support of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, a group of 57 Muslim-majority countries, which did so.

The ICJ ordered that Myanmar "take all measures within its power" to prevent further attacks on the Rohingya. Myanmar is a fragile state and power is heavily fractured within the country. Continuous violence from ethnic groups, militias, and border forces means it will be very difficult for Aung San Suu Kyi's government to ensure compliance with the ICJ ruling.



Refugee camps at Cox's Bazar  
EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (flickr.com)

## Refugees in South Africa Seeking Help from UNHCR

Refugees in South Africa have become increasingly desperate in their plight to find a safe country to be resettled in. In Cape Town, one of Africa's largest and most well-known cities, hundreds of refugees have waited years to get their asylum papers processed. One church, Cape Town's Central Methodist Church, has given refuge for more than 500 refugees, where they are crammed together for an indefinite amount of time as they wait for their applications to be processed.

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Frustrated with the lack of response from the South African authorities, refugees staged a peaceful sit-in last October, demanding to be resettled in another country. The South African authorities reacted swiftly, and, armed with stun grenades, tried to forcibly remove the protestors. Despite South Africa's progressive asylum policies, less than one out of every six applicants are granted asylum status. Currently, the country has a backlog of more than 140,000 asylum applications, and according to Lawyers for Human Rights, more than 80,000 of those people have been waiting for more than a decade. Even when applications are approved, those with visas have to get them renewed every few months, a frustrating process for people who are often unfamiliar with the system.

Many refugees have also been victims of xenophobic attacks. South African citizens are growing increasingly frustrated with the increasing numbers of refugees, many of whom are forced to create makeshift camps in public spaces in order to survive.

South Africa also recently introduced controversial new refugee laws. Coming into effect at the beginning of 2020, the new laws mean that refugees will no longer have an automatic right to work and study, age limits for dependents of refugees will be introduced, and any form of political activity will be forbidden, even if the activity is related to their home country. Human rights lawyers suspect the new laws will increase the already long wait times for applications to be processed.

## Illegal Miners Stoned to Death in South Africa

On Friday, the bodies of nine miners were found near Matholeville, in the Western district of Johannesburg. It is believed that the miners were beaten to death by stones. The miners were Lesotho nationals, and were illegally mining in South Africa. Lesotho has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.

Illegal mining is a growing problem in South Africa. South Africa has a term for these illegal miners: zama-zamas. Because the mining occurs illegally, the mines are unregulated, leading to dangerous and volatile working environments for miners. Poor Lesotho nationals often cross the border to South Africa to illegally mine for gold, which mostly ends up in Dubai. In recent years, the illegal industry has spread throughout South Africa, and now includes mining for diamonds and coal.

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It is unclear what motivated the attack, but it occurred shortly after a police raid in the area. With the growing number of zama-zamas in South Africa, there is evidence that criminal gangs are becoming involved in the trade, and people smuggling is becoming a common feature of the illegal trade. The South African government has noted that illegal mining is not only endangering the lives of the miners, but is also costing the government hundreds of millions of rands in lost production and tax revenue.