

INDONESIA'S ROLE IN ASEAN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISM ON THE RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

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Abstract

This study examines Indonesia's role in shaping ASEAN's human rights mechanisms in response to the Rohingya crisis. While ASEAN is often criticized for its limited capacity to address human rights violations due to its principles of non-interference and consensus, Indonesia has pursued a negotiation and diplomacy approach that balances humanitarian concerns with regional stability. Using a qualitative case study method and primary data analysis of ASEAN documents, government statements, and scholarly works, this article explores how Indonesia's diplomatic strategies have impacted ASEAN's collective response. The findings indicate that Indonesia acted as a norm entrepreneur by advocating for humanitarian assistance, facilitating dialogue, and pushing ASEAN to engage with Myanmar, despite institutional constraints. However, ASEAN's response remained limited, highlighting the persistent tension between state sovereignty and regional human rights norms. This article argues that Indonesia's efforts reflect the potential and limits of middle power diplomacy in Southeast Asia, offering insights into the interplay between national initiatives and regional mechanisms. The study contributes to the literature on constructivism in international relations and the evolving role of ASEAN in addressing transnational human rights crises.

Keywords: Indonesia, ASEAN, Rohingya crisis, human rights, diplomacy, constructivism, norm entrepreneur

1. Introduction

The Rohingya crisis remains one of the most severe and protracted humanitarian challenges in Southeast Asia. Originating in Myanmar's Rakhine State, the Rohingya—widely regarded as one of the world's most persecuted minorities—have endured decades of systemic repression, statelessness, and forced displacement. The Myanmar military's crackdown in 2017 resulted in the exodus of more than 700,000 Rohingya to neighboring countries, transforming a domestic crisis into a regional emergency that has attracted global attention (Shukri, 2021). The magnitude and persistence of this crisis have placed significant pressure on Southeast Asian states and tested the adequacy of ASEAN's human rights and conflict resolution mechanisms. Despite establishing human rights machinery such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), ASEAN has not responded positively to the Rohingya crisis. The principle of non-interference, a foundation of ASEAN's foreign policy, has long hampered ASEAN from taking serious actions against human rights violations (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). This has led to international condemnation of

ASEAN's supposed inaction and lack of enforcement authority (Jones & Mcgann, 2019). ASEAN's inability to enforce its human rights standards has led to continued displacement, brutality, and unrest, worsening the humanitarian crisis in the region. The Rohingya crisis has emerged as not only a challenge to ASEAN's institutional competence but also a measure of seriousness in the region in defending global human rights standards. In addition, the repeated failure of ASEAN to address the crisis substantiates the fact that a more unified and firm regional action is needed. The lack of a clearly defined enforcement mechanism unambiguously, together with the non-interference policy, has on many occasions meant diplomatic deadlock and ineffectual action. As the human rights crisis continues to escalate, there is the imperative of critically assessing the effectiveness of current measures and introducing alternative mechanisms to improve ASEAN's role in human rights governance.

The ASEAN human rights mechanism is the institutional framework and policies that ASEAN has established to promote and safeguard human rights in the region. These include the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), whose function is to address human rights issues via dialogue and collective actions. The name ASEAN's human rights mechanism reflects the organization's regionalism and non-interference, which influences its human rights governance strategy (Jones & Mcgann, 2019). The AICHR, established in 2009, is a consultative body that has a mandate to promote human rights by means of dialogue and capacity building (Missbach & Stange, 2021). Despite its efforts, the weak enforcement capability of the mechanism and emphasis on state sovereignty incline to diminish its ability to act forcefully during crises like the Rohingya crisis (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). Empirical findings indicate the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and more cooperation among member states to better manage human rights issues (Shukri, 2021).

Indonesia, as one of ASEAN's founding members, has assumed a prominent role in responding to the crisis. ASEAN, rooted in the principles of regional stability and cooperation, has historically adhered to the doctrine of non-interference, which has often constrained its ability to address intra-state conflicts among its members (Jati, 2017). This doctrine has been criticized as a major factor behind ASEAN's perceived inaction and ineffectiveness in dealing with human rights violations, including the Rohingya case (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). Nevertheless, Indonesia has emerged as a key diplomatic actor, carefully balancing ASEAN's traditional principles with its own humanitarian and foreign policy agendas.

Indonesia's initiative in this aspect is remarkable given its regional leadership position and proactive role in humanitarian diplomacy (Purnama et al., 2019). Indonesia has tried to walk the tightrope between appreciating the ASEAN principles and making moves to address the Rohingya issue through dialogue and humanitarian aid under its quiet diplomacy policy (Fitria, 2023). This strategy has entailed diplomatic efforts, providing humanitarian assistance, and mediation for opening up the communication channel between Myanmar and the world. The efficacy of the strategy is disputed, with scholars arguing that the strategy has failed to create dramatic change on the ground (Smith & Williams, 2021). The slow pace and minimal contribution of Indonesia's efforts are therefore cause for concern regarding the long-term efficacy of silent diplomacy as a solution strategy to conflict.

2. Literature Review

Indonesia's approach has largely relied on "quiet diplomacy," characterized by dialogue-driven initiatives, humanitarian assistance, and behind-the-scenes negotiations (Fitria, 2023). While this strategy aligns with ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making, it has also been faulted for lacking assertiveness in the face of grave human rights abuses (Smith & Williams, 2021). At the same time, Indonesia's bilateral initiatives and humanitarian engagements underscore its aspirations to act as a regional leader in human rights advocacy (Purnama et al., 2019). The diplomatic approach of Indonesia captures its policy of quiet diplomacy, with non-confrontation, communication, and humanitarian assistance. The diplomatic approach rests on the ASEAN pillars of non-interference and consensus decision-making and represents Indonesia's effort at regional stability while advocating for human rights. Similarly, other researchers such as Acharya and Sukma have also argued that Indonesian foreign policy is fueled by its practice of ASEAN collective identity and regional stability.

Indonesian diplomacy is based on the constructivist school of thought, focusing on the role of common norms and collective identity in affecting state action (Fitria, 2023). Indonesian silent diplomacy involves backroom negotiations and humanitarian efforts, which build trust and communication without overtly criticizing member states (Jati, 2017). This has been crucial to keeping ASEAN united and incrementally moving towards human rights. Critics argue that the strategy applies little pressure to nations like Myanmar, so they can continue abusing human rights (Smith & Williams, 2021). The Indonesian way of balancing regional security and human rights activism reflects the worst and best of ASEAN's consensus model.

This study adopts a constructivist framework, with a particular focus on the work of Amitav Acharya, to examine Indonesia's diplomatic role in shaping ASEAN's human rights mechanisms during the Rohingya crisis. Constructivism is useful for this study because it emphasizes that state behavior is shaped not only by material interests but also by shared norms, identity, and regional social structures (Acharya, 2007). Acharya argues that Southeast Asian regionalism is governed by a distinctive set of norms—particularly non-interference, informality, and consensus—often referred to as the ASEAN Way. These norms have become internalized among ASEAN member states, creating a regional identity that prioritizes harmony and sovereignty over external pressure and enforcement. As a result, ASEAN's institutional responses to human rights violations tend to be cautious and limited (Acharya, 2011).

Within this context, Indonesia's quiet diplomacy—which includes humanitarian assistance, informal dialogue, and non-confrontational mediation—can be interpreted through the constructivist lens as an effort to work within ASEAN's shared norms while promoting change. This aligns with Acharya's concept of "norm entrepreneurs", where states can influence regional behavior by introducing and localizing new values without directly confronting existing norms. This theoretical framework enables the study to explore how Indonesia, as a committed ASEAN member, leverages its normative credibility to push for a stronger humanitarian response while maintaining alignment with ASEAN's institutional culture.

The Rohingya crisis has further exposed these institutional weaknesses, raising urgent questions about the future of ASEAN's human rights architecture and the role of member states in shaping its evolution. This article investigates Indonesia's diplomatic role within this context, focusing on how its foreign policy initiatives have

contributed to ASEAN's collective response to the Rohingya issue. By analyzing Indonesia's diplomatic strategies and their interaction with ASEAN's institutional dynamics, the study examines how Indonesia has impacted ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis.

3. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, as defined by Creswell, to explore how Indonesia's diplomatic approach influences ASEAN's human rights mechanisms in the context of the Rohingya crisis. A qualitative case study is appropriate for in-depth examination of a bounded system—in this case, Indonesia's diplomatic behavior within ASEAN—using multiple sources of data. The case study allows for contextualized interpretation of Indonesia's foreign policy strategies in relation to regional institutional responses.

Data collection relies entirely on secondary sources, including official documents from ASEAN and the Indonesian government, reports by international organizations, academic journal articles, policy briefs, and reputable media coverage. The use of multiple data sources supports triangulation, which enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2007). These documents are selected through a systematic review process to ensure relevance to the research objectives and theoretical framework.

The study employs thematic analysis to analyze the data, following Creswell and Poth's qualitative data analysis spiral (Creswell; Poth, 2017). This involves organizing and coding the data, identifying patterns related to Indonesia's diplomatic strategies—such as quiet diplomacy, humanitarian outreach, and informal mediation—and linking these to ASEAN's institutional reactions, such as through the AICHR or joint statements. Themes are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework, especially constructivism and the ASEAN Way.

To ensure validity and reliability, the research uses strategies recommended by (Creswell, 2007) including data triangulation, rich description, and reflexivity. By engaging multiple data sources and maintaining transparency in analytical procedures, the study enhances its trustworthiness. Ethical concerns are minimal, as the research is based on publicly available secondary materials. All sources are cited appropriately, and the research adheres to academic integrity principles.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Historical Context of the Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis is one of Southeast Asia's most urgent humanitarian challenges. Rooted in decades of discrimination—particularly after the 1982 Citizenship Law that rendered the Rohingya stateless—the community has faced systematic restrictions on rights, movement, and recognition (Shukri, 2021). The situation escalated sharply in 2017 when Myanmar's military launched large-scale operations that displaced more than 700,000 Rohingya, prompting widespread international condemnation and transforming the issue into a regional concern (Shukri, 2021).

For ASEAN, the crisis exposed the limitations of its long-standing principles of non-interference and consensus. These norms, which form the

foundation of the ASEAN Way, have historically maintained regional stability but constrained the organization's ability to respond decisively to internal humanitarian crises (Jati, 2017). As a result, ASEAN institutions such as AICHR and the AHRD were limited to issuing statements and facilitating humanitarian access, drawing criticism for their lack of enforcement capacity and inability to hold Myanmar accountable (Jones & McGann, 2019; Missbach & Stange, 2021; Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018).

Within this regional context, Indonesia has been among the ASEAN member states actively engaged with the Rohingya issue. Consistent with its foreign policy orientation, Indonesia has employed humanitarian assistance and diplomatic engagement in its interactions with Myanmar and within ASEAN forums (Fitria, 2023; Purnama et al., 2019). These efforts make Indonesia a relevant case for examining how individual member states engage with humanitarian crises under ASEAN's institutional constraints.

4.2 ASEAN's Human Rights Mechanisms and Limitations

The Rohingya crisis underscores the structural weaknesses of ASEAN's human rights architecture, which is shaped by the organization's foundational principles and institutional culture. At the core of ASEAN's regionalism lies the doctrine of non-interference, consensus, and informality—collectively known as the “ASEAN Way.” While these norms have historically fostered regional stability and prevented open conflict among member states, they have also restricted ASEAN's ability to address human rights abuses within its members' borders (Acharya, 2011; Jati, 2017). In the case of Myanmar, these constraints became particularly visible as ASEAN grappled with balancing respect for sovereignty with the imperative to respond to a humanitarian emergency.

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), established in 2009, was envisioned as the main institutional body to promote and protect human rights in the region. However, its mandate has been limited to consultative functions such as dialogue, capacity-building, and awareness-raising, with no power of enforcement (Jones & McGann, 2019). This structural weakness has drawn significant criticism from scholars and observers, who argue that the commission's reliance on consensus prevents it from taking strong stances against member states accused of violations. During the Rohingya crisis, AICHR's inaction was emblematic of these limitations, as it refrained from condemning Myanmar's military actions and instead focused on humanitarian cooperation (Missbach & Stange, 2021).

The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), adopted in 2012, was another attempt to institutionalize human rights norms at the regional level. Yet, the declaration has faced blanket criticism for subordinating human rights protections to national and regional contexts, allowing states to justify inaction under the banner of sovereignty (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). As a result, ASEAN's human rights framework has often been described as rhetorical rather than practical, offering a platform for dialogue without concrete mechanisms for accountability or enforcement.

Empirical evidence from the Rohingya crisis further highlights these deficiencies. While ASEAN facilitated humanitarian assistance and organized

dialogues with Myanmar, its collective response was widely perceived as inadequate. The absence of binding measures to hold Myanmar accountable allowed the military to continue its operations without meaningful regional consequences (Jones & McGann, 2019). In this sense, the crisis exposed the “lowest common denominator” nature of ASEAN decision-making, in which the imperative to preserve unity among member states takes precedence over addressing human rights emergencies (Missbach & Stange, 2021).

The limitations of ASEAN's human rights mechanisms reflect the broader tension within the organization's identity: the balance between sovereignty and regional responsibility. On one hand, the adherence to non-interference has enabled ASEAN to maintain cohesion among politically diverse states. On the other, this very principle has hindered the development of robust human rights mechanisms capable of addressing crises such as that of the Rohingya (Jati, 2017; Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). The Rohingya crisis thus serves as a critical case study, demonstrating not only the institutional shortcomings of AICHR and AHRD but also the broader structural dilemma that continues to shape ASEAN's human rights trajectory.

4.3 Indonesia's Diplomatic Approach

Indonesia's response to the Rohingya crisis demonstrates a carefully calibrated foreign policy strategy aimed at balancing humanitarian concern with regional stability, reflecting its long-standing principle of *bebas aktif* (independent and active). As one of ASEAN's most influential members, Indonesia has sought to assert moral responsibility toward one of Southeast Asia's most severe humanitarian crises, while simultaneously maintaining cohesion within the regional bloc (Fitria, 2023; Jati, 2017). These dual objectives underscore Indonesia's ambition to act as both a regional stabilizer and a humanitarian advocate, highlighting its strategic capacity to navigate complex regional norms and expectations.

At the heart of Indonesia's strategy is quiet diplomacy. This approach entails behind-the-scenes negotiation, dialogue, and non-confrontational mediation, which avoids public criticism of Myanmar and refrains from coercive or punitive measures. Indonesia has leveraged both bilateral channels and ASEAN forums to encourage Myanmar to take steps toward addressing the crisis, aligning its efforts with ASEAN's norms of non-interference and consensus-based decision-making (Jati, 2017). This approach allows Indonesia to signal its concern for human rights without jeopardizing regional unity or provoking political backlash from member states, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the limits and possibilities within ASEAN's institutional framework.

Complementing its diplomatic engagement, Indonesia has actively pursued humanitarian assistance initiatives. These efforts have included direct relief operations, coordination with regional partners, and support for Rohingya refugee populations, encompassing provision of food, healthcare, and essential supplies (Purnama et al., 2019). By engaging in such practical assistance, Indonesia not only addresses immediate humanitarian needs but also enhances its soft power and normative authority in Southeast Asia. The country's proactive relief work demonstrates an attempt to convert moral responsibility into tangible outcomes, positioning Indonesia as a credible humanitarian actor in the region.

However, the reliance on non-confrontational diplomacy has constrained Indonesia's capacity to exert direct pressure on Myanmar, as ASEAN's institutional norms limit the use of public condemnation or coercive measures. Scholars argue that prioritizing regional stability often comes at the expense of accountability, effectively enabling Myanmar to continue human rights violations with limited pressure (Smith & Williams, 2021). Critics highlight that the absence of public condemnation, binding ASEAN measures, or more robust diplomatic leverage constrains the effectiveness of Indonesia's interventions. The reliance on informal channels, while preserving ASEAN cohesion, can slow decision-making and hinder the implementation of protective measures for affected populations.

From a constructivist perspective, Indonesia's approach reflects an active effort to operate as a norm entrepreneur within ASEAN's institutional culture. Rather than challenging ASEAN's principles of non-interference directly, Indonesia has sought to reinterpret and expand their meaning by framing humanitarian engagement as compatible with regional stability. Through initiatives such as sustained humanitarian assistance to Rohingya communities, diplomatic shuttle missions to Myanmar, and the consistent inclusion of humanitarian language in ASEAN discussions, Indonesia has promoted the norm that human rights concerns can be addressed through non-confrontational and consensus-based means. By advancing humanitarian protection as a shared regional responsibility rather than a violation of sovereignty, Indonesia has contributed to the gradual socialization of ASEAN member states toward greater acceptance of humanitarian norms within existing institutional boundaries (Acharya, 2007, 2011; Fitria, 2023). This strategy reflects a long-term vision of normative change, in which incremental persuasion and practice-oriented engagement are prioritized over immediate confrontational measures, consistent with the ASEAN Way.

However, Indonesia's strategy also exposes the structural tensions inherent in ASEAN's regional model. While quiet diplomacy preserves dialogue, cooperation, and regional harmony, it often results in limited tangible outcomes. Bilateral negotiations and participation in ASEAN initiatives have maintained engagement but have not yielded significant policy reforms or improved protections for Rohingya refugees (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). This dual role—upholding ASEAN unity while advocating for human rights—highlights the constraints imposed by the regional framework, where the principle of non-interference and the consensus model often prevent decisive action against member states committing human rights violations.

Moreover, Indonesia's diplomacy demonstrates the delicate balancing act required to navigate both moral responsibility and regional diplomacy. The country's efforts to mediate between humanitarian imperatives and ASEAN norms reflect a sophisticated understanding of regional politics but also underline the limitations of moral leadership within a context constrained by sovereignty and consensus. Indonesia's role exemplifies how a state can exercise normative influence while simultaneously confronting the institutional limitations that hinder rapid and forceful responses to human rights emergencies.

In conclusion, Indonesia's diplomatic approach to the Rohingya crisis exemplifies both strategic ingenuity and structural constraint. By leveraging its influence, normative credibility, and humanitarian engagement, Indonesia has

positioned itself as a leading actor in Southeast Asian humanitarian affairs. Yet, the ASEAN Way's entrenched principles of non-interference and consensus limit the impact of these efforts, revealing the complexities of advancing human rights within a regional context that prioritizes stability and unity over decisive intervention. The Rohingya crisis thus serves as a case study of Indonesia's careful balancing act—pursuing humanitarian objectives while respecting ASEAN's institutional norms and regional cohesion.

4.4 Impact and Limitations of Indonesia's Approach

Indonesia's approach to the Rohingya crisis demonstrates a careful balance between humanitarian advocacy and adherence to ASEAN's regional norms. As a prominent member of ASEAN, Indonesia has sought to exercise leadership in addressing human rights violations while respecting the organization's foundational principles of non-interference, consensus decision-making, and informal diplomacy (Fitria, 2023; Jati, 2017). This approach reflects Indonesia's attempt to maintain ASEAN unity while subtly promoting normative change, exemplifying the constructivist notion of "norm entrepreneurship," where a state can influence regional behavior without confronting established norms directly (Acharya, 2007, 2011).

4.5 Impact of Indonesia's Approach

Indonesia's strategy has produced tangible outcomes across several areas. Through quiet diplomacy, Indonesia has facilitated backchannel discussions and informal negotiations with Myanmar, creating platforms for dialogue that formal ASEAN mechanisms often cannot achieve due to political sensitivities (Jati, 2017). These diplomatic channels have helped maintain minimal engagement between ASEAN and Myanmar, ensuring that the Rohingya crisis remains on the regional agenda despite institutional constraints.

Another significant impact is seen in humanitarian assistance. Indonesia has actively provided aid to Rohingya refugees, including food, medical supplies, and logistical support in coordination with ASEAN initiatives and international agencies (Purnama et al., 2019). Such contributions demonstrate Indonesia's commitment to humanitarian principles and reinforce its credibility as a regional actor that seeks to uphold human rights without violating ASEAN's norms. These actions have not only alleviated immediate suffering but have also highlighted Indonesia's capacity to lead by example, encouraging other ASEAN members to participate in relief efforts.

Indonesia has also leveraged its diplomatic influence in ASEAN forums, advocating for dialogue, capacity-building programs, and incremental policy measures aimed at improving the regional human rights framework (Smith & Williams, 2021). By working within ASEAN's consensus model, Indonesia has managed to advance discussions on the Rohingya crisis without provoking resistance from member states, illustrating its skillful navigation of institutional limitations while pushing for gradual reform.

4.6 Limitations of Indonesia's Approach

Despite these achievements, Indonesia's strategy has critical limitations. The emphasis on quiet diplomacy, while effective in maintaining engagement,

often results in limited policy impact. Indonesia's efforts, including the provision of humanitarian assistance to Rohingya-affected communities and repeated informal diplomatic engagements with Myanmar through bilateral and ASEAN channels, have not significantly altered Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya or strengthened ASEAN's institutional capacity to address human rights violations (Fitria, 2023; Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). The organization's reliance on consensus and non-interference constrains Indonesia's ability to translate moral leadership into enforceable outcomes, leaving ASEAN largely reactive rather than proactive in human rights crises.

Additionally, the constructivist lens highlights a structural challenge: Indonesia's influence is bounded by ASEAN's collective norms. While the country can act as a norm entrepreneur, introducing ideas of human rights protection and humanitarian responsibility, these efforts are contingent on the willingness of other member states to embrace change (Acharya, 2007, 2011). This results in a slow, incremental process that is often insufficient in the face of urgent crises, as evidenced by Myanmar's continued human rights violations and the persistent plight of the Rohingya (Shukri, 2021).

Another limitation is the lack of enforcement mechanisms within ASEAN. Even when Indonesia advocates for stronger responses or humanitarian interventions, ASEAN's non-binding policies, weak institutional authority, and respect for sovereignty restrict the implementation of effective measures (Jones & Mcgann, 2019; Missbach & Stange, 2021). As a result, Indonesia's efforts often rely on moral persuasion and symbolic actions rather than concrete systemic change, highlighting the gap between intent and practical impact.

4.7 Broader Implications

Indonesia's approach demonstrates the potential and constraints of national-level leadership within regional institutions. While quiet diplomacy preserves ASEAN cohesion and enables humanitarian support, it simultaneously exposes the structural weaknesses of ASEAN's human rights framework, including its inability to enforce accountability or respond decisively to severe crises (Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018). This tension underscores the importance of strengthening ASEAN's mechanisms while recognizing the value of Indonesia's incremental and norm-driven strategies.

Indonesia's approach to the Rohingya crisis illustrates the complexities of balancing regional stability with human rights advocacy. Its quiet diplomacy, humanitarian initiatives, and ASEAN advocacy reflect a strategic attempt to shape regional norms and promote humanitarian standards. Yet, structural constraints within ASEAN—consensus-based decision-making, non-interference, and weak enforcement—limit the effectiveness of these efforts. The case of Indonesia thus provides a nuanced understanding of how a member state can influence regional human rights action while revealing the institutional reforms needed for ASEAN to respond more decisively to humanitarian crises (Fitria, 2023; Shukri, 2021; Smith & Williams, 2021).

4.8 Broader Implications for ASEAN Human Rights Framework

The Rohingya crisis highlights how ASEAN's principle of non-interference has become a structural obstacle to the implementation of decisive

humanitarian diplomacy. Designed to preserve sovereignty and regional harmony, this principle has constrained ASEAN's ability to respond collectively to mass human rights violations in Myanmar. As a result, formal ASEAN mechanisms such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) have remained limited to dialogue and humanitarian facilitation, reinforcing a pattern of cautious and incremental engagement rather than robust intervention (Jati, 2017; Jones & McGann, 2019; Missbach & Stange, 2021).

Within this constrained environment, Indonesia's diplomatic approach demonstrates how alternative channels can be pursued without directly violating ASEAN's foundational norms. Rather than challenging non-interference outright, Indonesia reframed humanitarian engagement as compatible with regional stability and consensus. Through quiet diplomacy, bilateral engagement with Myanmar, sustained humanitarian assistance, and agenda-setting within ASEAN forums, Indonesia sought to maintain access, reduce tensions, and ensure continued regional involvement in addressing the Rohingya crisis (Fitria, 2023; Purnama et al., 2019). These efforts influenced ASEAN's response by keeping humanitarian concerns on the regional agenda and facilitating limited forms of collective engagement that would otherwise have been politically unfeasible.

Indonesia's actions thus provide a new perspective on how humanitarian crises can be addressed within ASEAN's normative framework. While its approach did not result in enforceable human rights outcomes or significant policy change in Myanmar, it demonstrated that member states can exercise influence through norm entrepreneurship and practice-oriented diplomacy. By promoting humanitarian responsibility without undermining sovereignty, Indonesia contributed to shaping ASEAN's understanding of acceptable regional responses to internal crises (Acharya, 2007, 2011; Fitria, 2023). This case suggests that while ASEAN's human rights framework remains institutionally weak, proactive member states can still influence regional behavior by working creatively within existing norms rather than confronting them directly.

In this sense, Indonesia's diplomatic approach influenced ASEAN's response not by transforming its institutional mechanisms, but by expanding the scope of what is considered legitimate humanitarian engagement under the ASEAN Way. The Rohingya crisis therefore illustrates both the limitations of ASEAN's human rights architecture and the potential for incremental normative change driven by member-state leadership (Shukri, 2021; Zayzada & Nurdiansyah, 2018).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Indonesia's response to the Rohingya crisis illustrates the complexities of pursuing human rights advocacy within the ASEAN regional framework. Guided by its foreign policy principle of *bebas aktif*, Indonesia has sought to balance humanitarian responsibility with the imperative of regional stability, positioning itself as a leading humanitarian actor in Southeast Asia. Its strategy of quiet diplomacy—encompassing behind-the-scenes negotiations, informal dialogue, and non-confrontational mediation—reflects a sophisticated approach to working within

ASEAN's norms of non-interference and consensus, while promoting humanitarian values and encouraging Myanmar to address the crisis.

Complementing diplomatic efforts, Indonesia's active engagement in humanitarian assistance has provided tangible support to Rohingya refugees, reinforcing its credibility and moral leadership in the region. However, the approach is not without limitations. By prioritizing regional harmony and incremental change, Indonesia's diplomacy has often lacked the assertiveness needed to compel Myanmar to make substantive policy reforms, highlighting the tension between ASEAN's institutional constraints and the urgency of human rights protection.

Indonesia's actions demonstrate how a member state can exercise normative influence, provide humanitarian assistance, and maintain regional cohesion, while simultaneously revealing the limitations of ASEAN's collective human rights framework. The Rohingya crisis serves as a compelling case study of how Indonesia navigates the delicate balance between moral responsibility and regional diplomacy, offering lessons for the effectiveness of quiet diplomacy and the broader challenges of advancing human rights in Southeast Asia.

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