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FEARS OF STARVATION IN MYANMAR AS UN WARNS OF 'DISASTER'



A building in Rakhine State that was destroyed in an airstrike

Aid agencies are warning of starvation in war-torn Myanmar's Rakhine State, with the World Food Programme (WFP) making an urgent appeal for more donations to avoid a "full-blown disaster".

The agency has been trying to feed the rapidly rising number of displaced people in the state, including the 140,000 Rohingya Muslims who have been living in camps since they fled their homes during communal fighting in 2012.

The civil war which was ignited by the 2021 military coup has destroyed the economy across much of Myanmar and created huge humanitarian needs.

But the situation in Rakhine, which has been cut off from the rest of the country because of a military blockade, is significantly worse than other areas. On 20 April, a 50-year-old father living in the Ohn Taw Kyi camp added insecticide to his food and that of his wife and two

children. He died, but the quick intervention of his neighbours saved the lives of the others.

This is the largest of the camps housing displaced Rohingya and is situated along the road heading west from the Rakhine State capital Sittwe.

Food had become so scarce the family was starving. This account has been confirmed by four people from Sittwe who spoke to the BBC.

In June an ethnic Rakhine family of five living in Sittwe is reported to have died the same way.

Last week an elderly couple who had been displaced by the recent fighting between the Myanmar military and the insurgent Arakan Army are reported to have hanged themselves in despair over their lack of funds and food.

■ Source: bbc.com

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■ Bradford is set to make global history by becoming the first city in the world to establish a permanent memorial to the Rohingya people, recognising the genocide and persecution they have faced.



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STARVATION BLOCKADE IN RAKHINE THREATENS REGIONAL STABILITY AND HUMAN LIVES

By Kazi Mamunur Rashid, serves as Secretary General of Jatiyo Party (JaPa)

In the far-western corner of Myanmar, the crisis in Rakhine State is spiraling toward a catastrophe that could reverberate far beyond its borders. For months, both ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims have been trapped under an all-encompassing blockade imposed by Myanmar’s military regime. It is not an accidental collapse of supply routes – it is a calculated strategy, weaponizing hunger to punish and control entire communities.

Food, medicine, and humanitarian assistance have been cut off almost entirely. In some towns, residents survive on rice husks, roots, or whatever meager scraps they can trade in increasingly barren markets. Aid workers have been shut out. The United Nations and major relief organizations are blocked from reaching the worst-hit areas. Hospitals are running out of antibiotics, painkillers, and even basic rehydration salts. Pregnant women give birth without medical care; the elderly die from treatable illnesses.

The junta’s blockade is not without precedent. In 2017,

during its campaign against the Rohingya, Myanmar’s military burned crops, destroyed food stocks, and poisoned wells in a brutal effort to drive people from their homes. Today’s tactics in Rakhine follow the same blueprint – but this time, the deprivation is indiscriminate, affecting all who live within the sealed-off zones.

The Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic armed group now controlling large swaths of Rakhine, claims to be offering better governance than the junta. But while the AA’s rise has diminished the military’s reach in some areas, it has not translated into robust humanitarian access. Political calculations, military priorities, and a lack of resources mean that aid remains dangerously scarce. For civilians, the reality is stark: two power centers, neither of which can or will ensure that lifesaving supplies reach those in need.

From a legal standpoint, the blockade is unambiguous. International humanitarian law prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Article 54 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions is

explicit, and the Rome Statute defines such actions as a war crime. Yet, in practice, these violations continue with little more than statements of concern from the international community.

What makes this crisis particularly dangerous is its potential to destabilize the wider region. Rakhine is strategically located along the Bay of Bengal and borders Bangladesh. Should the blockade persist, mass displacement is inevitable. Bangladesh – already hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees from the 2017 exodus – would face an impossible humanitarian burden. Its resources are stretched thin, public tolerance is wearing down, and international donor fatigue is growing.

India, sharing a long border with Myanmar’s restive northeast, would also be exposed to the spillover. An influx of displaced people could heighten tensions in border states already grappling with insurgency and fragile security.

■ Source: modernghana.com