

ROHINGYA PRESS

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LONG ROAD TO ROHINGYA REPATRIATION



OVER the past decade, the international community has watched the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar evolve into one of the most pressing humanitarian emergencies of our time. At the centre of the response has been the United Nations — praised for its humanitarian efforts, yet criticised for political paralysis and delayed action. The Rohingya, a Muslim minority group rooted in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, have faced decades of systemic discrimination. Denied citizenship under the 1982 law, they have long lived as stateless people with limited access to education,

healthcare, and freedom of movement. Regarded by the Myanmar government and many in the Buddhist-majority population as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, the Rohingya have remained politically and socially marginalised despite their historic ties to the region. In August 2017, tensions exploded after an insurgent group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, attacked security posts. The Myanmar military retaliated with a brutal campaign of violence — marked by mass killings, rape, and widespread arson. Over 740,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh,

The Myanmar military retaliated with a brutal campaign of violence — marked by mass killings, rape, and widespread arson. Over 740,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, joining hundreds of thousands already living in refugee camps. The United Nations quickly labelled the events a ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’. Yet critics argue that the UN’s initial response was slow and undermined by Myanmar’s refusal to allow access to international observers. Before the crisis peaked, UN officials had already raised alarms about growing unrest but were limited in their ability to intervene or even investigate. In the wake of the exodus, UN agencies mounted an unprecedented humanitarian response. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration led massive relief efforts in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh —now home to Kutupalong, the largest refugee settlement on Earth. Emergency shelters, food aid, sanitation, and medical care were delivered to over a million displaced people.

■ Source: newagebd.net

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FUNDING CUTS FORCE NEW THINKING FOR WORLD'S LARGEST REFUGEE CAMP

The IFRC's regional director lays out a roadmap for how to improve conditions for more than a million Rohingya refugees.

by Alexander Matheou - Regional Director for Asia Pacific at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

On the surface, life in the world's largest refugee camp complex appears to be ticking along as usual. But looming on the horizon are funding cuts that will soon dramatically change conditions for the more than one million people who live in camps near Cox's Bazar in southern Bangladesh.

Provision of soap could cease within weeks. Cooking fuel soon after. Education is to be cut back to prioritise limited resources for water and food. Eight years into the displacement, running the camps as in previous years appears untenable. Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh's interim leader, has called for an international conference in September to help unpack options for what happens next.

Despite their horrific origins, setting up the camps in Cox's Bazar was a success for humanitarian action. I first visited in 2017 when the allocated land was a chaos of tarpaulin sheets and traumatised new arrivals. Thanks to the combined efforts of the government of Bangladesh, international donors, local actors and international humanitarian organisations – shelter, water, and food were available to

hundreds of thousands of people within weeks. Almost a decade later, the place is unrecognisable. There are roads, lighting, clinics, water points, schools, day centres, and kiosk shops. The camps represent a remarkable, sustained effort to protect victims of persecution and violence.

Yet success is part of the problem. Support has been unsustainably generous. Multiple and duplicative expatriate-led teams live in the nearby town and visit constantly. Fleets of branded vehicles plough endlessly through the narrow streets. The facilities in the camps are very basic – but access to clean water is far better in the camps of Cox's Bazar than in the poorer areas of most Bangladeshi cities, as is access to doctors, nurses, medicines, teachers, and carers.

The displaced Rohingya represent around 0.7% of the population of Bangladesh, but a vastly disproportionate percentage of humanitarian financing and international attention are concentrated on their plight: something that inevitably irritates Bangladeshi political leaders and host communities.

And success in setting up camp services masks a darker, more complex reality for the Rohingya. Eight years of displacement and camp life have taken their toll. Boredom, depression, and domestic violence are endemic. Gangs rule the camps at night. Trafficking, kidnapping, recruitment to fight in Myanmar, and desperate escape attempts, often ending in tragedy on the Andaman Sea, are all on the rise. These trends will only be exacerbated by the coming funding cuts to basic services, underlining the urgency to find new options.

But options are limited. The previous government in Bangladesh stuck rigidly to the line that everyone in the camps must go back to Myanmar.

The only compromises in the meantime were to allow limited humanitarian services until people could go home, and to decongest the camps in Cox's Bazar by moving some people to the remote island of Bhasan Char. It is time to rethink that strategy. Repatriation remains elusive while fighting plagues Rakhine State, where most of the Rohingya used to call home...

■ Source: thenewhumanitarian.org

UN ENVOY TO MYANMAR WARNS THAT VIOLENCE PUTS COUNTRY ON ‘PATH TO SELF-DESTRUCTION’

Myanmar is on “a path to self-destruction” if violence in the conflict-wracked Southeast Asian nation doesn’t end, the U.N. envoy warned on Tuesday.

Julie Bishop told the U.N. General Assembly that “alarmingly” the violence didn’t end after a powerful earthquake in late March devastated parts of the capital, Naypyitaw, and the country’s second-largest city, Mandalay, killing more than 3,000 people and injuring thousands more.

Ceasefires announced by some parties have largely not been observed, “embedding a crisis within a crisis,” and people in Myanmar must now deal with the raging conflict and the earthquake’s devastation, said Bishop, a former foreign minister of Australia.

“A zero-sum approach persists on all sides,” she said. “Armed clashes remain a barrier to meeting humanitarian needs. The flow of weapons into the country is fueling the expectations that a military solution is possible.” A widespread armed struggle against military rule in Myanmar began in February



A temporary building is seen after clear collapsed building caused by strong earthquake in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, Friday, May 23, 2025. (AP Photo/Aung Shine Oo)

2021 after generals seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 6,600 civilians are estimated to have been killed by security forces, according to figures compiled by nongovernmental organizations. The military takeover triggered intensified fighting with long-established armed militias organized by Myanmar’s ethnic minority groups in its border regions, which have struggled for decades for more autonomy. It also led to the formation of pro-democracy militias that support a national unity government established by elected lawmakers barred from taking their seats after the army takeover. More than 22,000 political prisoners are

still in detention, Bishop said, including Suu Kyi, who turns 80 on June 19, and the ousted president, Win Myint. The U.N. envoy said she detected “some openness to political dialogue with some regional support, but there is not yet broader agreement on how to move forward.”

In meetings with the country’s leaders, Bishop said she encouraged them to reconsider their strategy, which has left the country more divided. She also warned against elections, planned for December or January, saying they risk fueling greater resistance and instability unless there is an end to the violence and they can be held in an inclusive and transparent way.

■Source: apnews.com