



## The Rohingya crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

### Facts & Figures

#### EU humanitarian aid\*:

##### Myanmar

2007-2018:  
Close to €87 million

##### Bangladesh

2007-2018:  
Over €86 million

##### Thailand and Indonesia:

Since 2013:  
Over €1.1 million

#### Total funding

Over €174 million

*\*the figures refer to European Commission humanitarian aid only, and do not include contributions by EU Member States.*

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\* All the latest ECHO Factsheets:  
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More than five years after the inter-ethnic violence which erupted in Rakhine State of Myanmar in 2012, many remain displaced. The vast majority of them are Rohingya. © EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash

### Key messages

- The Rohingya crisis is a human rights crisis with serious humanitarian consequences. In Myanmar, the Rohingya have very limited access to basic services and viable livelihood opportunities due to strict movement restrictions and denied citizenship rights. This has rendered them one of the largest stateless populations in the world.
- The crisis has a **wider regional dimension**, with record numbers of Rohingya fleeing to neighbouring countries. Following violent incidents in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine in August 2017, over 700 000 Rohingya have fled across the border into Bangladesh; during the previous year, some 87 000 people had already fled after the October 2016 security incidents.
- Since 2007, the European Union has provided close to €87 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Myanmar's Rakhine State, including in the more isolated northern areas. In 2018, the EU is funding humanitarian projects worth €4 million for Rohingya and host communities in Rakhine State to address some of the most urgent needs, including protection, shelter, health, water, sanitation, food and psychosocial support.
- The EU has also been providing significant funding for life-saving assistance to Rohingya refugees and host communities in **Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district** through international NGOs and the UN. **Since 2007, over €86 million has been allocated** for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection, psychological support and disaster risk reduction, including €36 million in 2018.

## Humanitarian situation and needs

**Rakhine State in Western Myanmar** is historically home to a Muslim population, most of whom self-identify as Rohingya. For decades, this ethnic minority has suffered legal and social discrimination. While there are historical economic relations with the Buddhist Rakhine community, there are also long-standing tensions between the two groups. The 1982 Citizenship Law stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship and even the right to self-identify. The Rohingya are also subject to many restrictions in day-to-day life: banned from travelling without authorisation and prohibited from working outside their villages, they cannot marry without permission and, due to movement restrictions they lack sufficient access to livelihood opportunities, medical care, and education.

In 2012, widespread violence in Central Rakhine left 140 000 people, mostly Rohingya, displaced. While the authorities have initiated a limited return process, over 120 000 people remain internally displaced more than six years after the events, living in squalid, overcrowded camps with only limited access to health care, education, and livelihood opportunities. Tensions and mistrust between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities continue.

Some Rakhine groups erroneously perceive that humanitarian aid, which is allocated strictly according to needs, is distributed unevenly and benefits only the Rohingya. In March 2014, this triggered organised attacks against international community offices, residences, and warehouses, resulting in millions of euros of losses. In 2015, the flood and cyclone relief interventions, supporting affected people from both communities, managed to mitigate this perception to some extent; it however remains active, partly due to limited development opportunities in Rakhine State. Access to the camps around Sittwe is highly regulated preventing timely and adequate assistance delivery, and access has been drastically reduced after the August 2017 crisis.

On 25 August 2017, a deadly assault by Rohingya insurgents on multiple police posts in Northern Rakhine triggered a brutal crackdown on the Rohingya population, and since then, over 700 000 civilians have fled across the border into Bangladesh. The renewed fighting has resulted in humanitarian operations across Rakhine coming to an abrupt halt. Only the Red Cross Movement (consisting of International Committee of the Red Cross, Myanmar Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), the World Food Programme and, to some extent, Action Contre la Faim are currently providing food assistance. Other life-saving services including nutrition, health, protection and psychosocial activities remain largely suspended. The latest clashes come less than one year after a previous assault by insurgents on three border guard posts, on 9 October 2016, triggered a series of violent incidents and military operations that saw more than 87 000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh in search of refuge.

The August 2017 violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State triggered a new massive influx of Rohingya refugees crossing the **Bangladesh** border, stretching the capacities of humanitarian agencies operating there, which had already been strained since the previous influx in October 2016. The massive numbers of new arrivals have increased the number of Rohingya population living in the camps in Cox's Bazar to close to 900 000. The initial influx of Rohingya to Bangladesh dates back to 1978, with a large arrival from 1991 to 1992. While a little more than 33 600 people living in the two official camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara have obtained refugee status in the past, the rest of them are not recognised as such by the Government of Bangladesh. Labelled as "undocumented Myanmar nationals", they have no legal status in Bangladesh.

The refusal of the authorities to register Rohingya at birth or provide marriage certificates and other civil documentation makes it difficult to fully assess the scale of the humanitarian needs of these people, many of whom live in difficult conditions with inadequate food intake and diet diversification, or access to health care. Without legal status, they are also unable to pursue education and formal employment opportunities, and remain vulnerable to exploitation and serious protection risks.



## The European Union's humanitarian response

The European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations has funded relief programmes in **Rakhine State of Myanmar** and in **Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh** since 1994. The EU established an office in Dhaka (Bangladesh) in 2002 and another in Yangon (Myanmar) in 2005 to facilitate the delivery of EU humanitarian assistance.

In 2018, the EU has funded projects throughout **Myanmar's Rakhine State** to address some of the most urgent needs (such as protection, shelter, health, water, sanitation, food and psychosocial support) for affected communities displaced by outbreaks of violence, and host communities.

Together with its humanitarian partner organisations, the EU continues to provide basic services. In order to deliver this vital assistance, the security of aid workers must be ensured, together with unimpeded access to affected communities.



In Myanmar's Rakhine State, the European Commission has been providing basic services in camps created in the aftermath of inter-ethnic violence in 2012, such as access to clean water and sanitation facilities. (© EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)

The EU has also provided funding for life-saving assistance to the unregistered Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh, through international NGOs and the UN.



In Bangladesh, basic healthcare and nutritional support is provided to both the unregistered refugees and the host communities (© EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)

In 2018, the EU has thus far provided €36 million in assistance in the form of basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection, psychological support and disaster risk reduction assistance for the monsoon season.

The latest allocation has brought the total funding for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to more than €86 million since 2007. Apart from this life-saving assistance, EU humanitarian aid continues to advocate for better communication with the displaced populations and a more protection oriented support system.

In response to the large influx of Rohingya following the latest outbreaks of violence, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was also activated in October 2017 in order to contribute to a coordination hub introduced to enable a greater humanitarian presence and support humanitarian activities provided to Rohingya refugees.

