



The Rohingya crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian aid*:

Myanmar/Burma

2010-2017:

Over € 76.5 million

Bangladesh

2007-2017:

Close to € 35 million

Additional funding in September

2017 for Myanmar and Bangladesh: € 3 million

Thailand and Indonesia:

Since 2013:

Over € 1.1 million

Total funding

Over € 115 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 four years after the inter-ethnic violence which erupted in Rakhine state of Myanmar/Burma in 2012, over 120 000 people remain displaced. The vast majority of them are Rohingyas, staying in camps. © EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash

Key messages

- The Rohingya crisis is a human rights crisis with serious humanitarian consequences. In Myanmar/Burma, the Rohingya have very limited access to basic services and viable livelihood opportunities due to strict movement restrictions and are denied citizenship rights. This has rendered them one of the largest stateless populations in the world.
- **The Government** must prioritise **inter-communal dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution** in Rakhine State, where tensions between ethnic communities are widespread, and community segregation is institutionalised.
- While international organisations help meet **emergency humanitarian needs**, it is crucial that both the Union (national) and Rakhine State (regional) governments address the basic needs of the affected population while promoting durable solutions, in line with international standards, and stimulate inclusive and sustainable development for all communities.
- **Safe and unhindered access** to populations in need should be granted to humanitarian aid organisations, not only in Myanmar/Burma, but in all countries of Asia where the Rohingya people are seeking asylum and protection.
- The crisis has a **wider regional dimension**, with record numbers of Rohingya fleeing to neighbouring countries. Following violent incidents in Northern Rakhine in October 2016 and August 2017, over 400 000 Rohingyas have fled across the border in to Bangladesh. Earlier between 2014 and 2015, some 94 000 people also departed irregularly on precarious boat journeys, often falling prey to human trafficking and ending up in modern-day slavery.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Rakhine State in Western Myanmar/Burma is home to at least 800 000 Muslims, most of whom self-identify as Rohingya. For decades they have 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 Rohingyas of their citizenship and even the right to self-identify. They were effectively barred from voting in the last general elections in November 2015 and are left without political representation. The Rohingya are also subject to many restrictions in day to day life: banned from travelling without authorization 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. Due to restrictions to the number of children per couple, thousands of children are left with no birth registration documents, further restricting their access to basic services and decreasing the chance for a decent life.

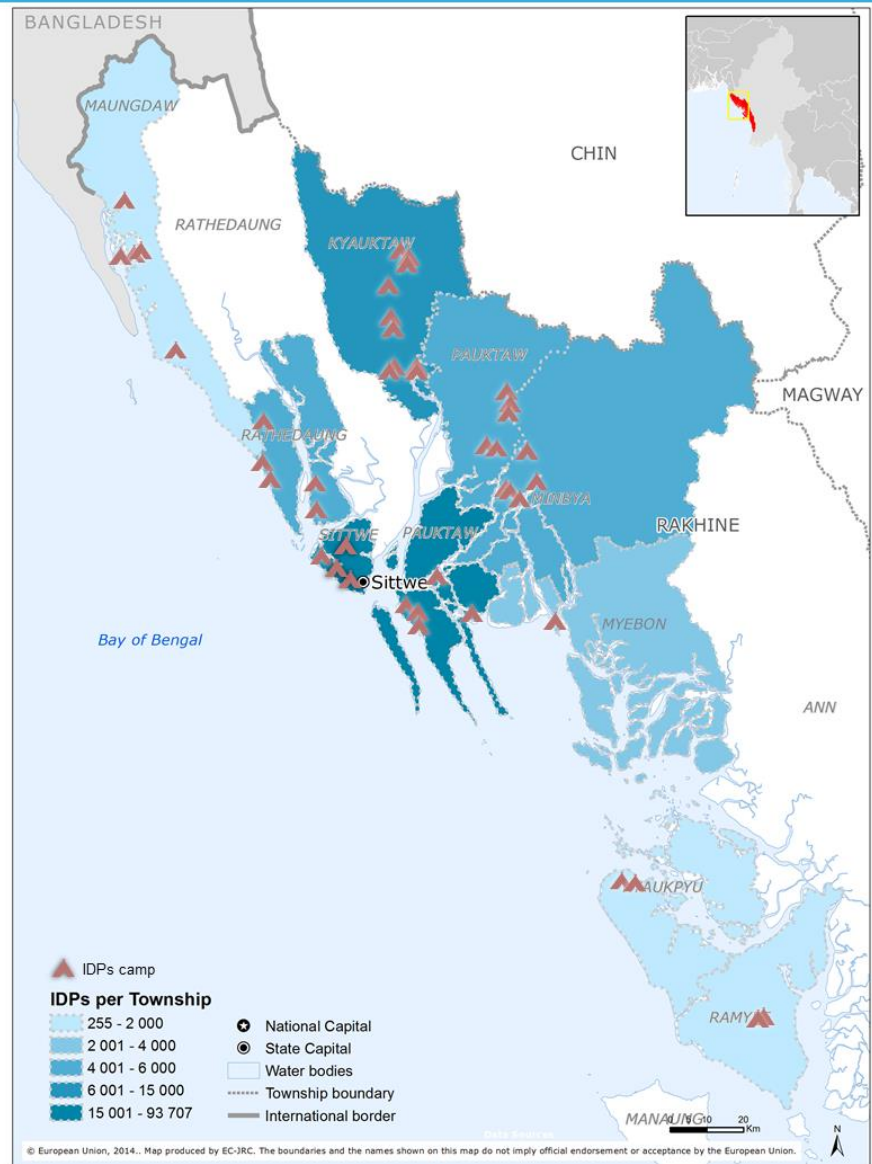
In 2012, widespread violence in Rakhine left some 140 000 people, mostly Rohingya, displaced. While the authorities have initiated a limited return

process, over 120 000 people remain displaced more than five years after the events, living in squalid, overcrowded camps with only limited access to health care, education and livelihood opportunities. As for those who have returned, the movement restriction they are subjected to implies they continue to be aid dependent. Tensions and mistrust between the two 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 organized 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, allowed to mitigate this perception to some extent. This perception however remains active, partly due to limited development opportunities in Rakhine State. Access to the IDP camps around Sittwe remains highly regulated preventing timely and adequate assistance delivery.

Displacement of Rohingya communities in Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma

Rohingyas - Myanmar



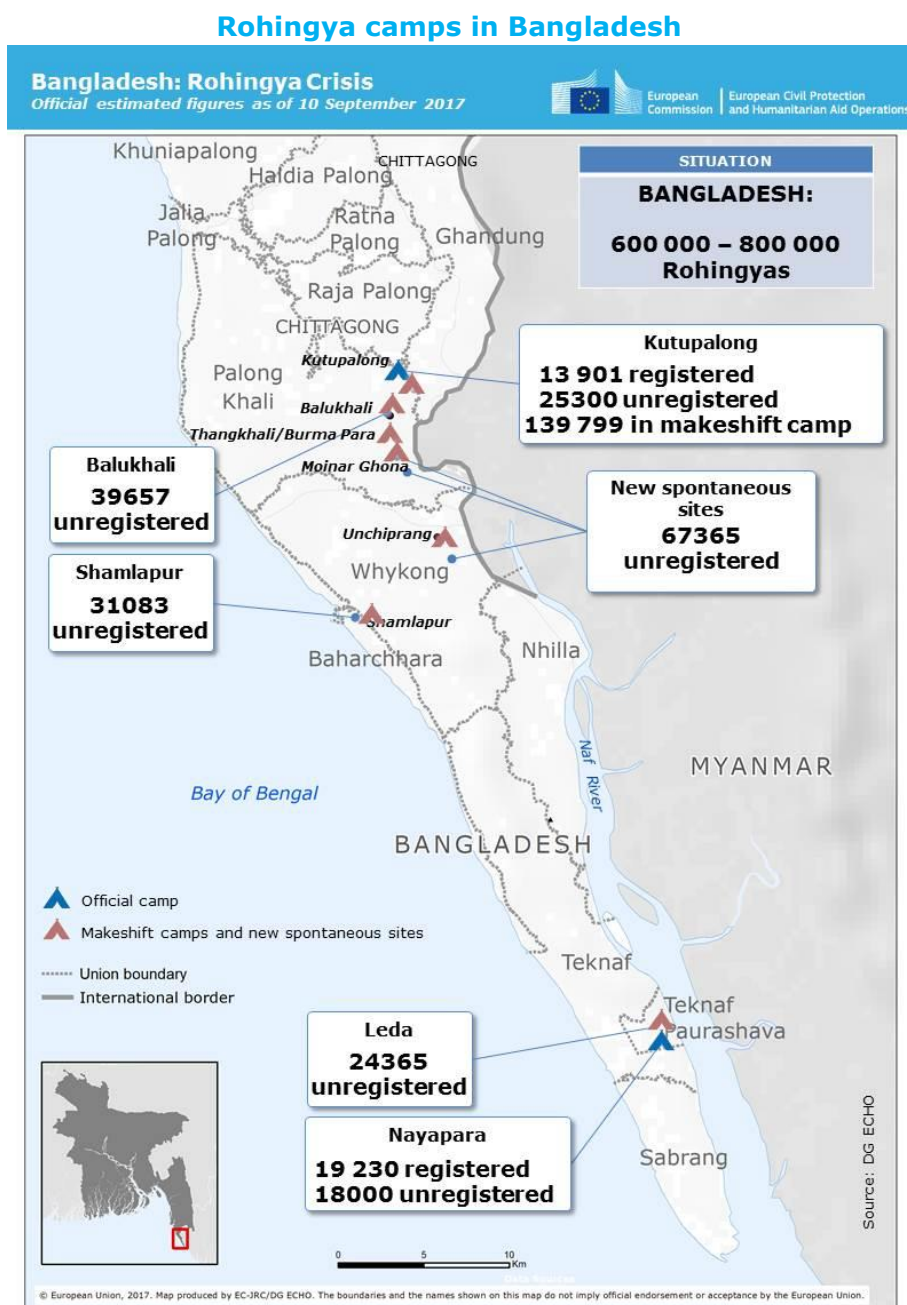
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Due to the deplorable living conditions, tens of thousands of people – including many women and children – have fled on precarious boat journeys to neighbouring countries. Many do not survive these journeys while others fall prey to human trafficking networks.

On 25th August 2017, a deadly assault by Rohingya insurgents on multiple police posts in Northern Rakhine triggered a new cycle of violence, prompting an estimated 313 000 civilians to flee across the border into Bangladesh within two and half weeks. The renewed fighting has resulted in humanitarian operations across Rakhine coming to an abrupt halt, leaving more than 350 000 people deprived of much-needed regular assistance. 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 initial influx of Rohingyas to **Bangladesh** dates back to 1978, with a large arrival in 1991-1992. Presently, 33 148 are living in two official camps managed by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR source) in Nayapara and Kutupalong. While these are recognized by the Government of Bangladesh as refugees, the others are labelled “undocumented Myanmar nationals” and 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 August 2017 violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine state triggered a new massive influx of Rohingya refugees coming across the border, stretching the capacities of humanitarian agencies operating there, which had already been strained since the previous influx in October 2016. This recent influx has doubled the population living in the existing camps, triggering the creation of several spontaneous settlements where an estimated 35 000 are seeking shelter.

Conditions in the official refugee camps used to be better than those of the estimated 300 000 to 500 000 Rohingya living in the Kutupalong and Balukhali makeshift camps, Leda site, Shamlapur village and the surrounding areas. In 2014, the Government of Bangladesh recognised the humanitarian needs of people living in these sites by launching a National Strategy for Undocumented Myanmar Nationals - a broad roadmap outlining the authorities’ general approach to the crisis. Sections of this Strategy are being rolled out by the International Organisation for



Migration (IOM), which has been mandated by the Government to coordinate implementation. With the Strategy, services to undocumented refugees have somewhat improved, but serious concerns over safety and security remain as the process so far has failed to provide the unregistered refugees with any kind of legal status, nor have they been informed about the Strategy, its process and potential implications. Many households are female headed, which increases exposure to exploitation and gender based violence. The situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is defined as a "forgotten crisis" by ECHO.

In the last few years, **Thailand** became a major transit point for refugees and migrants, many trying to reach Malaysia. Since 2013 Thai authorities have arrested and detained over 2000 Rohingya in Immigration Detention Centres, police stations or social welfare facilities. However, a crackdown on human smugglers and traffickers in 2015 has reduced the flow of refugees transiting through the country. As of July 2017, 151 Rohingyas remained in detention throughout Thailand, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The European Union's humanitarian response

The European Union's humanitarian aid department (ECHO) has been funding relief programmes in **Rakhine State of Myanmar/Burma** and in **Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh** since 1994. Additional support is also being provided in **Thailand** since 2013. ECHO established an office in Dhaka (Bangladesh) in 2002 and another in Yangon (Myanmar/Burma) in 2005 to facilitate the delivery of EU humanitarian assistance.

Since 2010, ECHO has provided more than € 76.5 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Rakhine state, including in the more isolated northern areas. In 2017, ECHO is funding projects throughout **Myanmar's** Rakhine State to address some of the most urgent needs, including food and nutrition, basic health services, water, sanitation, protection and shelter for affected communities displaced by outbreaks of violence in 2012 and 2016. Together with its humanitarian partner organisations, ECHO is committed to continue to contribute to the provision of basic services. In order to deliver this vital assistance, the security of aid workers and unimpeded access to affected communities, must be ensured.

ECHO has also been providing significant funding for life-saving assistance to the unregistered Rohingya refugees in **Bangladesh** in Cox's Bazar district through international NGOs and the UN. Since 2007, close to € 35 million have been allocated for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection and psychological support, including €4.5 million in 2017. Apart from this life-saving aid, ECHO will continue to advocate for better communication with the displaced populations and a more protection oriented support system.

Since 2013 ECHO has allocated more than € 1.1 million to IOM, including € 200 000 in 2017, to provide food, basic household items, health care and protection to some 3 000 Rohingya men, women and children detained in Thailand after allegedly entering the country illegally to travel further afield. This total includes a regional humanitarian response to the mass maritime migration in 2015, dubbed the 'boatpeople crisis' of the Andaman Sea, which saw a large number of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi migrants fleeing their home countries in search for a safe haven in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.



- 1) In Myanmar/Burma's Rakhine State, ECHO has been providing basic services in the IDP camps created in the aftermath of inter-ethnic violence in 2012, such as access to clean water and sanitation facilities. (Photo Credit: EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)
- 2) In Bangladesh, basic healthcare and nutritional support is provided to both the unregistered refugees and the host communities (Photo Credit: EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)