



## The Rohingya crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

### Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian  
aid\*:

Myanmar/Burma  
and Bangladesh

2017:  
almost € 27 million

Since 2007:  
close to €130 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  
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More than five years after the inter-ethnic violence which erupted in Rakhine State of Myanmar/Burma 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/Burma, 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 northern Rakhine in August 2017, over 655 500 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 2010, **the European Union (EU) has provided close to €77 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Myanmar's Rakhine State**, including in the more isolated northern areas. In 2017, the EU funded projects worth over €8 million throughout 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.
- The EU 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, over €53 million have been allocated** for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection and psychological support, including €18.7 million in 2017.

## Humanitarian situation and needs

**Rakhine State in Western Myanmar/Burma** is historically home to a Muslim population, 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 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 some 140 000 people, mostly Rohingya, displaced. While the authorities have initiated a limited return process, over 120 000 people remain internally displaced in Sittwe area more than five 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 IDP 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<sup>th</sup> August 2017, a deadly assault by Rohingya insurgents on multiple police posts in Northern Rakhine triggered a new cycle of violence, and since then some 655 500 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 (ICRC), Myanmar Red Cross (MRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - and to some extent the World Food Programme (WFP) are currently providing food assistance operations. 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<sup>th</sup> 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 latest influx has increased the number of Rohingya population living in the camps in Cox's Bazar to nearly one million compared to approximately 300 000 prior to the event. The initial influx of Rohingya to Bangladesh dates back to 1978, with a large arrival in 1991-1992. About 33 000 are living in two official camps managed by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Nayapara and Kutupalong. While these are recognised 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 European Union's humanitarian response

The European Commission's humanitarian aid department has been funding relief programmes in **Rakhine State of Myanmar/Burma** and in **Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh** since 1994. The EU 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, the European Union has provided close to €77 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Rakhine State, including in the more isolated northern areas. In 2017, the EU-funded 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. 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/Burma's Rakhine State, the European Commission 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. (© EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)

The EU 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, over €53 million has been allocated for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection and psychological support, including €18.7 million in 2017. Apart from this life-saving aid, 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 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.



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

