



Refugees in Thailand

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian aid since 1995: € 119.7 million to help refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border

In 2017:

- € 200 000 in assistance to Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants under detention

In 2016:

- € 1.3 million in assistance to refugees in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border
- € 300 000 in assistance to Rohingya and Bangladeshi irregular migrants under detention
- € 300 000 in assistance to asylum seekers in Thailand

In 2015:

- € 2.1 million in assistance to refugees staying in camps
- € 300 000 in assistance to Rohingya and Bangladeshi irregular migrants in Thailand and Indonesia

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ECHO funding has supported medical services for 80 000 refugees on the Myanmar/Burma border ©EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash

Key messages

- More than 30 years on, the situation of refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Thailand has become one of the world's most protracted refugee crises, and there is a need to find durable solutions.
- Since 1995, the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) has provided funding for humanitarian assistance in the refugee camps. Most recently, efforts have focused on primary health care for the most vulnerable, as well as protection activities.
- There is a need for better information to refugees on conditions for their potential return, which should be strictly voluntary.
- Since 2013, ECHO has been supporting Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals interned in Immigration Detention Centres and shelters in Thailand.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

The Thai government is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention but has allowed refugees from Myanmar/Burma (currently over 102 000) to stay in nine camps (temporary shelters) along the border between the two countries.

Thailand has seen an exponential increase in the number of asylum seekers in recent years. According to the United Nations' Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the number of people seeking refugee status increased from 1 120 in 2013 to 7 082 at the end of 2015. Not entitled to any legal status in Thailand, these asylum seekers are exposed to detention and exploitation.

Over the past few years, Rohingya and Bangladeshi men, women and children fleeing violence and difficult conditions in Myanmar/Burma and Bangladesh, have been intercepted by Thai authorities en route to Malaysia and interned in Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) and social shelters. They often fall prey of ruthless human trafficking networks, leading Thai authorities to launch a crackdown on smuggling rings in 2015. This resulted in what came to be known as the "boat people crisis in the Andaman Sea", which saw thousands of Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants stranded at sea without food or water after the traffickers abandoned the ships, fearing arrest if they came to shore. Disembarkations were eventually allowed in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia in May-June 2015. Since then, the number of arrivals in the region has significantly decreased.

Major challenges

Despite a large scale resettlement programme (over 106 000 individuals resettled in third countries since 2005), the major challenge is still to find durable and sustainable solutions for the remaining refugee population in Thailand. Stranded Rohingya migrants in shelters and IDCs remain a concern due to their stateless status.

The European Union's humanitarian response

The European Commission has provided humanitarian aid to refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Thailand since 1995, funding mainly [food assistance](#)*, [primary health care](#)*, and [protection](#)*. In 2016, the European Commission allocated € 1.3 million to this crisis, bringing the total amount over the past two decades to almost € 120 million.

The EU funds, channelled through various partners, have enabled around 80 000 refugees from five different camps to access basic health services, whilst health workers have received additional training. Through other EU funding instruments, the European Commission also finances basic and vocational education, livelihood, water supply and complementary health programmes for both refugees and host communities. This additional EU assistance totals some € 51 million since 1995.

Since 2013, EU humanitarian funding has also allowed the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to provide Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants detained in IDCs and shelters in Thailand with emergency humanitarian support, interpretation and medical care. Following the boatpeople crisis of May 2015, ECHO extended this support to the regional level, providing IOM with funding for operations also in Indonesia. To date, the Commission has contributed over € 1.1 million to this initiative, including an allocation of € 200 000 for 2017.

In 2016, € 300 000 were allocated to UNHCR for expediting the processing of a backlog of asylum claims (around 6 000 persons as of March 2016) in Thailand. This action helped reduce the time for the refugee status determination and thereby reducing protection risks inherent to their situation. It benefitted directly more than 3 000 individuals.

More information on the Rohingya can be found on the [Rohingya crisis factsheet](#)*.



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