



The Rohingya crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian aid*:

Myanmar/Burma

2010-2017:
Over €76.5 million

Bangladesh

2007-2017:
Close to €43 million

Thailand and Indonesia:

Since 2013:
Over €1.1 million

Total funding

Over €117million

* 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/Burma in 2012, many remain displaced. The vast majority of them are Rohingyas. © EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash

Key messages

- The Rohingya crisis is a human rights crisis with serious humanitarian consequences. In Myanmar/Burma, the Rohingyas 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 Rohingyas fleeing to neighbouring countries. Following violent incidents in Northern Rakhine in August 2017, over 530 000 Rohingyas 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 EU 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, the EU 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.
- The European Commission 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 € 43 million have been allocated** for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection and psychological support, including €14 million in 2017.

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. 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.

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 mitigating 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.

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 more than 530 000 civilians to flee across the border into Bangladesh over the course of merely a month. 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 more than doubled the population living in the camps.

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.

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. 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.

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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)

The European Commission 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 € 43 million have been allocated for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection and psychological support, including €14 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.



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

Since 2013 EU Humanitarian Aid 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.

