

Concern rising over fate of Rohingya refugees, detained and sent home by India: UNHCR

The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) has voiced 'great concern' for the safety and security of seven Rohingya men who have been sent home by Indian authorities, after reportedly being denied access to lawyers, or full consideration of their asylum applications.

"[We] continue to seek clarification from the authorities on the circumstances under which these individuals were returned to Myanmar," Andrej Mahecic, a spokesperson for UNHCR [told](#) journalists at the UN Office at Geneva on Friday.

Prior to their return, the men were moved from Silchar prison in Assam province, near the border with Bangladesh – where they had been in detention since 2012 – to the province of Manipur, bordering Myanmar.

"On learning of their detention and the planned return, and based on credible reports that the seven men are Rohingya, UNHCR requested the Indian authorities to grant access to this group, to assess their need for international refugee protection," said Mr. Mahecic.

According to the UNHCR spokesperson, the UN agency did not receive a response to its request and was unable to secure access for a lawyer from a state legal service.

Beginning in August last year, widespread ethnic violence in Myanmar's Rakhine province forced some 720,000 members of the country's minority Muslim Rohingya community to flee their homes and seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh – joining several thousands more who fled Myanmar in years prior – sparking one of the largest and most complex refugee crises in the world.

Former UN human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, described the violence against the Myanmar as "[textbook example of ethnic cleansing](#)".

An [independent international fact-finding mission](#), established by the UN Human Rights Council to look into the violence, found patterns of gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, committed by Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw.

It also documented mass killings, the scorching of Rohingya settlements and large-scale gang rape and other sexual violence by Myanmar soldiers.

About 18,000 registered Rohingya refugees and asylum-seekers in

India – UNHCR

In addition, there are some 18,000 Rohingya refugees and asylum-seekers, living in different locations, who have registered with the UNHCR office in India, said Mr. Mahecic.

UNHCR issues identity cards to the registered refugees and documents to asylum-seekers, helping prevent arbitrary arrests, detention and deportation. It works with the state legal services, authorities and a network of partners to provide legal support to persons of concern in detention in India.