

Conditions in Myanmar not yet suitable for Rohingya refugees to return safely – UN agency

Conditions in Myanmar not yet suitable for Rohingya refugees to return safely – UN agency

23 January 2018 –

The necessary safeguards for Rohingyas to return to Myanmar are absent, and there are ongoing restrictions on access for aid agencies, the media and other independent observers, the United Nations warned on Tuesday, two months after Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed on a plan for voluntary repatriation of the refugees.

“To ensure the right of refugees to return voluntarily, and in safety and in dignity, we call again on Myanmar to allow the necessary unhindered humanitarian access in Rakhine State and create conditions for a genuine and lasting solution,” Adrian Edwards, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) [told](#) the regular news briefing in Geneva, Tuesday.

Access would allow for assessment of the actual conditions and the long-term viability of the returns, as well as help address the legitimate safety concerns for any refugees contemplating their return there, he emphasized.

In addition, refugees also need to be properly informed and consulted about such conditions in order for returns to be safe, voluntary and sustainable added the UNHCR spokesperson.

Also vital is the full implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission [a panel led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan], including the call for peace and security for all communities in Myanmar’s Rakhine state, inter-communal dialogue, freedom of movement, access to livelihoods and achieving solutions for the legal and citizenship status of Muslim communities.

“Turning these recommendations [...] into a reality on the ground is essential to building confidence for returns and addressing the tense inter-communal situation that has built up over many years in Rakhine state,” said Mr. Edwards.

“Without this, the risk of dangerous and rushed returns into a situation where violence might reignite is too great to be ignored,” he stressed.

Over 650,000 members of the minority Muslim Rohingya community have taken refuge, and more continue to arrive, in Cox’s Bazar in southern Bangladesh after having been forced to flee their homes in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine province [following an outbreak of brutal violence](#) in late-August 2017.

UNHCR remains prepared to work with both governments towards finding a long-term solution to this crisis in the interest of the refugees themselves, of both governments, the host community in Bangladesh and all communities in Rakhine state.