

UN ramps up aid delivery amid new surge of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

13 October 2017 – The speed and scale of people fleeing Myanmar has triggered a humanitarian emergency in Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of refugees now depend on humanitarian assistance for shelter, food, water and other life-saving needs, says the United Nations migration agency.

“The [seriousness of the situation](#) cannot be over-emphasized,” said International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) Bangladesh Chief of Mission Sarat Dash in a press statement.

According to the IOM-hosted Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) of aid agencies, an estimated 536,000 people have fled Myanmar and arrived in Cox’s Bazar over the past 47 days. Numbers spiked again when some 15,000 more crossed into Bangladesh between 9-11 October.

Prior to the August influx, infrastructure and basic services in Cox’s Bazar were already under strain as it hosted over 200,000 displaced Rohingya.

“These people are malnourished and there is insufficient access to clean water and sanitation in many of the spontaneous sites. They are highly vulnerable. They have fled conflict, experienced severe trauma and are now living in extremely difficult conditions,” underscored Mr. Dash.

With many of the new arrivals requiring immediate health assistance, agencies have appealed for \$48 million to scale up primary health care in the new settlements over the next six months.

“The risk of an outbreak of communicable disease is very high given the crowded living conditions and the lack of adequate clean water and sanitation,” said IOM Senior Regional Health Officer Patrick Duigan, pointing out that maternal, newborn and child health care are also in desperately short supply.

While almost all new arrivals need non-food items, the spike in migrants is also overwhelming existing water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

With the population in multiple sites and settlements more than doubling since 25 August, there is tremendous pressure on existing settlements, resulting in a huge site management need for some 700,000 people, costing an estimated \$65 million, according to ISCG site management agencies.

Meanwhile, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his capacity as Chair of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state, is in New York to brief a closed-door session of the Security Council on the situation. He is expected to speak to reporters after the meeting.

Collecting refugee data

At the same time, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) has been working with the Government in a new 'family counting' exercise to collect data on the estimated 536,000 newly-arrived refugees and their needs.

"The exercise will enable the Government, UNHCR and other agencies to have a [better understanding of the size](#) and breakdown of the population and where they are located," UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic told reporters at today's regular press briefing in Geneva.

"It is key for getting the right aid to the right people. It will also help flag refugees with special protection needs, such as single mothers with small infants, people with disabilities, or children and elderly refugees who are on their own," he added.

The exercise has so far counted 17,855 families – more than 70,000 individuals. It is currently being carried out in the Balukhali Extension and Kutupalong Extension camps and should cover an estimated 525,000 people over the coming weeks.

Mr. Mahecic said that UNHCR is working closely with refugee community leaders on presenting information to the new arrivals and providing equipment and the database. The data will, in turn, be shared with other service providers.

Meanwhile, IOM, UNHCR and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) are organizing a donor pledging conference to raise \$434 million for the immediate needs of the refugees and the local communities hosting them.

[Libya: UN agencies scale up response in as fighting displaces thousands in Sabratha region](#)

13 October 2017 – United Nations relief agencies have upped their response in western Libya's Sabratha region following intensification of conflict that has already driven over 15,000 people from their homes.

"Because of the conflict, many of the normal systems that people depend on to meet their daily needs have ceased to function," said Richard Ragan, the head of the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) country office in Libya, in a [news release](#).

"[Our] support gives hope to those most in need and offers life-saving food assistance during a period when help is most urgently needed."

With its partners on the ground, the UN emergency food relief agency has delivered enough food to feed some 1,500 people who have been most affected by the fighting. It is providing food assistance to almost 300 families, with each ration offering a family of five a month's supply of rice, pasta, wheat flour, chickpeas, vegetable oil, sugar and tomato paste.

In 2017, WFP aims to assist 175,000 Libyans suffering from food insecurity. It has prioritized the most vulnerable families, especially the internally displaced people, returnees and refugees, as well as households headed by unemployed women, but needs \$9.2 million to continue its food assistance operations in the country for the next six months.

Similarly, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) has also [displaced emergency assistance](#) including sleeping bags, hygiene kits, food and blankets to respond to the immediate needs. It has also deployed staff to various locations to assess needs.

"The most pressing needs include psychological first aid, emergency medical care, food, water, core relief items and shelter, as many [refugees and migrants](#), including children and vulnerable individuals, are sleeping out in the open," Andrej Mahecic, a spokesperson for the UN refugee agency, told reporters at a regular news briefing in Geneva.

However, information from the ground points to a very grim picture – individuals are suffering from trauma, injuries and diseases, and many are without proper clothing or shoes. There are also unaccompanied and separated children, with some children reporting the recent loss of their parents.

Located 80 kilometres (about 50 miles) west of the Libyan capital Tripoli, Sabratha city has been the location of three weeks of fierce fighting. The hostilities are reported to have damaged or destroyed over 500 houses and displaced more than 3,000 Libyan families and stranded over 10,000 refugees and migrants, who are need of urgent assistance.

In 2017, WFP aims to assist 175,000 Libyans whose food insecurity means they do not know where their next meal is coming from.

[**On International Day, UN forecasts 14 million people made homeless each year by disasters**](#)

13 October 2017 – Sudden onset disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and tropical cyclones, are likely to displace nearly 14 million people worldwide each year, warns a United Nations-backed study released Friday – International Day for Disaster Reduction.

“This is an [important baseline](#) against which we can measure progress in reducing disaster risk. The findings underline the challenge we have, to reduce the numbers of people affected by disasters,” said Robert Glasser, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“Apart from death or severe injury in a disaster event, there is no more crushing blow than the loss of the family home which is often a place of work in many of the countries worst affected,” he added.

The numbers of internally displaced people, [refugees and migrants](#) are at an all-time high. Besides conflict, disasters trigger a significant percentage of such movements. Unless disaster risk is managed better, homelessness among people in the world’s most disaster-prone countries is predicted to continue rising.

The study, covering 204 countries and territories, shows that eight of the 10 countries with the highest risk of future displacement and loss of housing are in South and Southeast Asia.

In India, 2.3 million people face such risk, followed by China at 1.3 million; Bangladesh at 1.2 million; Vietnam at 1 million; the Philippines at 720,000; Myanmar at 570,000; Pakistan at 460,000; Indonesia at 380,000; Russia at 250,000; and the United States at 230,000.

INTERVIEW: [Few global issues as urgent as tackling climate and disaster risks – Robert Glasser](#)

The study was conducted by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction ([UNISDR](#)), using probabilistic risk models for disasters, developed by UNISDR, which have been used to calculate estimates of future economic losses from a range of natural hazards.

This is the first time that these techniques have been applied to forecast potential average numbers of people made homeless over long periods of time. Slow on-set disasters attributed to drought and sea-level rise are not included.

“The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) adopted by UN Member States two years ago has a key target for a substantial reduction in the numbers of people affected by disasters by 2030 and these findings should spur efforts to improve land zoning and the quality of buildings especially in seismic zones and on land exposed to storms and floods.” Mr. Glasser said.

[UN rights office ‘deeply concerned’](#)

over arrests of LGBT people in Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia

13 October 2017 – The United Nations human rights office on Friday expressed deep concern about a wave of arrests in Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia of more than 180 people perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), many of whom have reportedly been mistreated by law enforcement officials.

Arresting or detaining people based on their actual or perceived [sexual orientation](#) or gender identity is by definition arbitrary and violates international law, including rights to privacy, non-discrimination and equality before the law, said Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), at a press briefing in Geneva.

In all three countries, authorities have alleged that those arrested were involved in sex work although in almost all cases the accused have denied such allegations or indicated that they were coerced into confessing involvement, he added.

Mr. Colville said that Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia should take immediate action to release anyone detained on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, drop charges based on vaguely worded and discriminatory laws, and should repeal such laws in line with their legal obligations under international law and long-standing United Nations recommendations.

In Azerbaijan, more than 80 people presumed to be gay or transgender have been arrested in Baku since mid-September. In Egypt, more than 50 people have been arrested in recent weeks based on their assumed sexual orientation or gender identity. In Indonesia, more than 50 people were arrested at a sauna in Jakarta last Friday, based on their perceived sexual orientation.

Human rights challenges in Libya ‘massive, but not insurmountable,’ UN rights chief says after visit

12 October 2017 – After a brief mission to Libya, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein on Thursday said the Government “can and should” lead efforts to urgently address arbitrary detention, torture and other grave violations that must be brought to an end

in the crisis-torn North African country.

“No United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has ever made an official visit to discuss the human rights situation in Libya in the days of Muammar Gaddafi or in the years that have followed the end of its dictatorial regime,” Mr. Zeid said in a [statement](#) issued by his Office (OHCHR) at the end of his mission.

The High Commissioner travelled to Libya for one day, having not announced the visit in advance for security reasons. While there, he met with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Serraj, the Ministers of Justice and the Interior, and the head of the department responsible for the management of migrant detention centers.

Mr. Zeid was also able to make brief visits to one of the country’s major prisons and a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs). “My trip was enlightened by a very useful meeting with Libyan civil society and women human rights defenders,” he said.

Despite the high hopes that followed the 2011 revolution, the human rights situation in Libya continues to be marked by widespread abuses and violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict with impunity, he stated, explaining: “Thousands of people are arbitrarily detained in detention centers across the country, some since the 2011 armed conflict, many of whom are subjected to torture and ill-treatment.”

He went on to note that armed groups are killing and illegally holding civilians and fighters hostage. “Civilian men, women and children are killed and injured every week by the indiscriminate use of weapons [...] Yet these aspects of the human rights situation in Libya rarely [make it into] the headlines.”

Displaced Libyans and representatives of civil society met by the High Commissioner presented him with a clear picture of the serious abuses committed by armed groups and the impunity they currently enjoy. “The actions of armed groups are hampering significant progress towards stability, development and peace in the country,” Mr. Zeid underscored.

Alarming situation of migrants

While in Libya, the human rights chief also spoke with authorities about the alarming situation of migrants in the country. “I call on the Government to establish alternatives to detention in Libya, to put an end to the practice of arbitrary detention and to report on abuses committed against migrants in detention centers,” he stressed.

Overall, he said that while the challenges facing human rights in Libya are “massive,” they are not insurmountable. At the same time, he recognized that the large-scale collapse of the judicial system, power and influence of armed groups and the many challenges facing the Government are very real.

“But the Government can and should lead. It can begin to combat the practice of arbitrary detention and to take back the powers conferred on armed groups.

The situation in detention centers can be addressed," Mr. Zeid stated, stressing that a concerted effort by the Government and all stakeholders, including the UN and the international community, can change and improve the situation.