

Press release: UK Government calls for more international support for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Minister Mark Field and Joanna Roper have held talks with senior ministers in Dhaka and have called for greater humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya refugee community, particularly to help support the provision of education for refugees and host communities.

Over 706,364 people have fled from their homes in Burma's Rakhine State into Bangladesh since August 2017, joining around 340,000 Rohingya who had previously fled.

In a visit to Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, where over a million refugees are living in crowded and unsafe refugee camps, Minister Field and Joanna Roper met refugee families and community leaders to learn about the persecution they suffered in Rakhine, and to hear about the challenges that life in the camps presents. They saw first-hand the damage caused by recent monsoon rains, and the work of the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian agencies to protect the refugees.

They visited a UNICEF child-friendly site where they saw the efforts being made to keep young people safe and heard about efforts to provide education for refugee children. They also visited community and health centres, and met with a site management team to hear about the UK's contribution to monsoon preparedness. Joanna Roper was invited to see a safe space for women at the camp, and heard about their experiences of displacement.

Tomorrow (1st July) in Dhaka, Minister Field and Joanna Roper will hold talks with senior ministers on the Rohingya crisis, and the wider situation in Bangladesh. They will hear how Bangladesh is making strong inroads into providing twelve years of quality education for women and girls, and visit a factory where they will speak to the female workforce about labour rights.

Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field MP said:

What I witnessed today was truly heartbreaking, and only redoubles my determination to support the refugees and keep up the pressure on the Burmese authorities.

I call on the international community to work with Bangladesh to step up support for the refugees, both during this monsoon season and in the longer term through the provision of education and livelihoods.

The UK remains a leading donor to the crisis, committing £129m since September last year to support the refugees and vulnerable host communities.

We will continue to use international pressure and dialogue with the Burmese authorities to make progress, including through our support for the EU sanctions measures announced on 25 June.

UK Special Envoy for Gender Equality Joanna Roper said:

The stories we heard in the camps of violence against the Rohingya in Burma are deeply disturbing, but I was moved by the efforts being made to provide support to women and girls in the camps, as well as the learning centres for Rohingya children, displaying a thirst for education despite all that they have endured at such a young age.

Girls' education is the right thing to do: women and girls have the right to be educated, equal, empowered and safe. As the Foreign Secretary said at the UN Human Rights Council on 18 June, we must leave no girl behind and enable all girls to receive 12 years of quality education. That message is equally important for Rohingya girls to hear.

Further information