

Scale of displacement across Myanmar 'very difficult to gauge', says UN refugee agency

Concern over escalating violence in Myanmar's Chin and Rakhine states continues to grow, with civilians reportedly forced to flee both internally, and across the border into Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have already sought shelter.

Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) expressed deep concern over the humanitarian impact of the continuing violence and the "potential for both further internal displacement and the outflow of refugees".

"As part of inter-agency efforts, UNHCR stands ready to support the humanitarian response in the affected areas in Myanmar", he stated, noting that more than 720,000 mostly-Muslim Rohingya had fled a 2017 military operation in Rakhine state, which was condemned at the time as being tantamount to genocide, by the then UN [High Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits Rohingya refugee camps in Chakmarkul camp, Cox's Bazar, south-east Bangladesh, while on mission with the UN Refugee Agency., by © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

"The scale of it is very difficult to gauge", said Mr. Mahecic. "We understand from some of the reports that say 200 people have sought shelter", but "without effective access in Rakhine, and without effective access in other parts, we can't assess the scope of the current internal displacement as a result of the violence which flared up some time in December last year."

The refugee agency has called on the Government of Bangladesh to continue its policy of offering shelter and support and offered to assess and respond to the needs of civilians who have arrived in the past few weeks, seeking safety from violence in Myanmar.

Since August 2017, nearly 700,000 minority Muslim Rohingyas have fled violence in Myanmar across the border into Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, joining several hundred thousand more that were already settled there in overcrowded camps.

"UNHCR is grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for its generosity and the leadership it has shown", Mr. Mahecic said.

During a visit early in the week to the world's largest refugee camp, Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh, UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie said that it was "deeply upsetting" to meet the families who "have only known

persecution and statelessness their whole lives, who speak of being 'treated like cattle'".

She also met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in the capital of Dhaka, where she expressed UNHCR's gratitude to the Government and the people of Bangladesh, for their kindness.