

Violence drives more Rohingyas to Bangladesh; in Myanmar, Pope appeals for tolerance – UN

28 November 2017 – While their numbers have dropped in recent weeks, hundreds of Rohingya refugees are still crossing the border into Bangladesh from Myanmar every day, the United Nations migration agency said Tuesday.

People are still arriving in the settlements [with horrifying accounts of physical and sexual abuse](#), harassment and murder. All of them fear for family members left behind in Myanmar, said Andrew Lind, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Emergency Coordinator in Cox's Bazar.

Over the past three months, more than 600,000 Rohingya refugees have crossed into Cox's Bazar, fleeing violence and oppression in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine state. The most recent influx of some 1,800 in the past week, brings the total population of Rohingya seeking safety in the district to more than 836,000.

One 30-year-old woman who arrived in the Balukhali settlement on Monday with her five children told IOM that she fled seven days ago when her village was burned to ground, saying that while one group of attackers kidnapped people another set houses on fire.

The family hid for two days in a nearby village before making their way to the border. She explained that with no access to healthcare in Rakhine state, her husband died several months ago.

Like the other refugees, the family arrived with almost nothing to the congested settlement, where the humanitarian response tries to catch up with the vast needs of a desperate population.

Concerns raised over water safety, security and fear-mongering on the ground

Meanwhile, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) found that over 60 per cent of water sources tested in the settlements were contaminated with E.coli. Shallow wells located less than 30 feet away from latrines are culpable, with full latrines and a lack of space to drain them contributing to the potentially life-threatening problem.

To date, IOM has drilled a total of 374 deep tube wells and installed 4,973 permanent and emergency latrines in the Cox's Bazar settlements and host communities.

Security concerns are also growing as the settlements have become a target for human traffickers. IOM is seeking funding to help better protect the refugees and offer support to survivors of exploitation and human

trafficking.

In other news, Pope Francis, who is currently in Myanmar, has condemned politicians who propagate alarm over immigration, arguing that fear-mongering engenders violence and racism.

In a message about migrants and refugees that the Vatican sent to heads of State and Government before the Pontiff's trip, he said: "Those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great worry for all those concerned about the safety of every human being."

After Myanmar, Pope Francis will travel to Bangladesh, where he is expected to meet a small group of Rohingya refugees.