



UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO RAKHINE STATE, MYANMAR

1. The flare-up of violence and resulting public disorder in Rakhine State of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Myanmar) in early June 2012 has resulted in loss of life, significant population displacement - including outside the country's borders by boat - and destruction of property. The authorities, attempting to restore law and order, declared a state of emergency, but many thousands of residents of Rakhine State have nevertheless been forced to flee, including significant numbers seeking safety outside of Myanmar.
2. As of 25 July 2012, 61,421 people (over 5,700 Rakhine and over 53,300 Muslims) have been displaced internally, with a larger number of individuals affected by the violence. As of the same date, the Myanmar authorities have confirmed there were 43 designated locations for accommodating displaced members of the Rakhine community and 9 designated locations hosting displaced Muslims. The numbers of Rakhine in designated locations have reduced in the last few weeks as many Rakhine people have returned to their homes, although the Muslim designated locations continue to experience an increase.
3. More than one thousand persons have reportedly attempted to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. However, the Bangladesh Government has stated that it will keep its border closed and return any arrivals to Myanmar. For people fleeing the violence, their most urgent needs are to be admitted to safety in the country to which they flee, to be disembarked if arriving by boat, and to be provided with medical care according to their needs as well the basic necessities of life. UNHCR is ready to assist governments in providing this protection and assistance.
4. As the situation in Rakhine State is fluid and may remain uncertain for some time to come, UNHCR considers that, until public order and security are restored for all communities in Rakhine State, States should not forcibly return to Myanmar persons originating from Rakhine State. This bar on return needs to remain in place until such time as the security and human rights situation in the country has stabilized sufficiently to permit a safe and dignified return of those not in need of international protection.

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Geneva
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