

This report is produced by OCHA Myanmar in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

Highlights

- Latest estimates indicate that about 94,000 people remain displaced (either in Bangladesh or within northern Rakhine) as a result of the 9 October attacks and subsequent security operations.
- Humanitarian organizations in Bangladesh estimate that over 74,000 people have crossed the border into Bangladesh since October and remain in the Cox's Bazaar area.
- An estimated 20,000 people remain internally displaced in northern Rakhine.
- Restrictions on humanitarian access (particularly for international staff, who are mostly still not being permitted to work outside the main towns of Maungdaw and Buthidaung) are compromising the quality of the life-saving assistance and other services humanitarian organizations can provide.

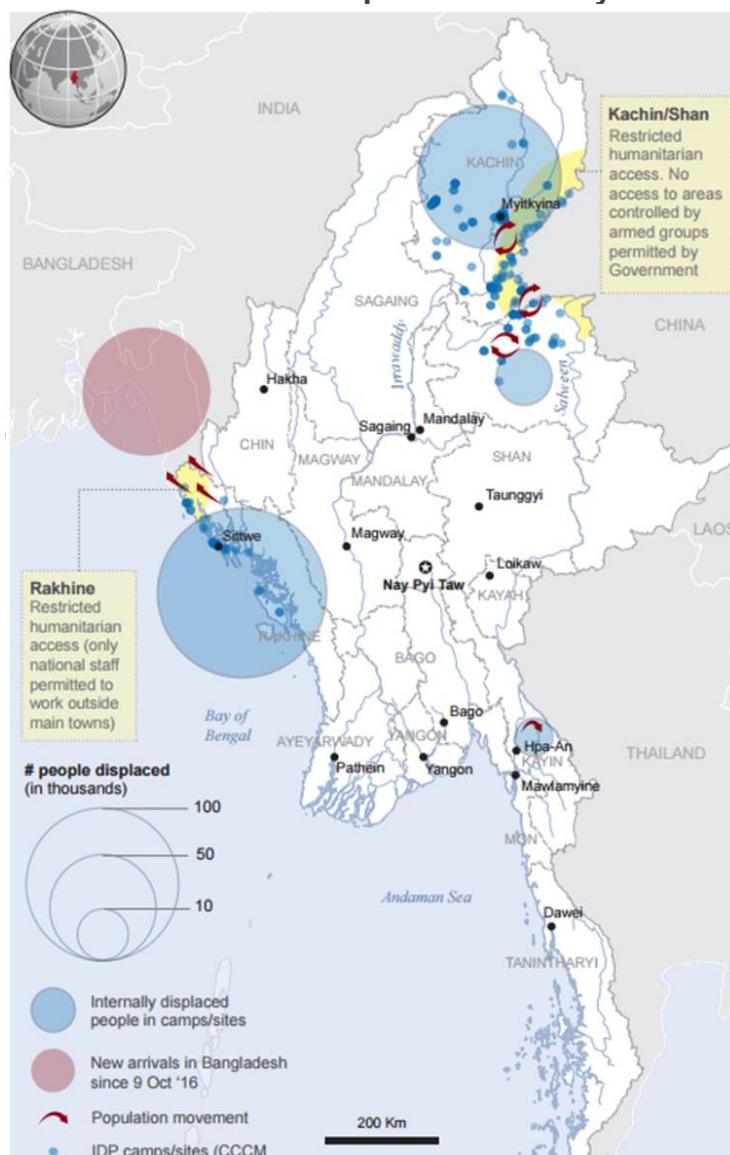
Situation Overview

Access restrictions have constrained the ability of the humanitarian community to establish concrete data and conduct the necessary assessments in order to measure the scale and impact of the current displacement in northern Rakhine as a result of the 9 October border post attacks and subsequent security operations. Latest estimates indicate that about 94,000 people remain displaced. This includes approximately 74,000 people who have crossed the border from Myanmar into Bangladesh and some 20,000 people who remain displaced in the northern part of Maungdaw Township. There are also 226 Rakhine and Mro evacuees who continue to be hosted at two locations in Maungdaw Township.

The Government announced that the security operations launched in response to the 9 October attacks ended on 15 February 2017. On 18 February, at least 2,000 displaced people who had been sheltering in neighbouring villages were allowed to return to their village of origin in the northern part of Maungdaw Township.

The Government has permitted an incremental resumption of humanitarian activities, including distributions of food and other relief items (NFIs, hygiene kits, water purifications tablets) in some areas. However, humanitarian access remains far from what it was before the 9 October attacks, particularly in the northern part of Maungdaw Township. Most international staff do not have access to affected areas beyond Maungdaw and Buthidaung towns. Some NGOs report that even where access has been restored, their national staff are not permitted to stay overnight at project sites and have faced other restrictions on their travel routes. In the northern part of Maungdaw Township, humanitarian organizations have not been allowed to resume most of their protection activities.

Displacement in Myanmar



UNOCHA, 3 March 2017

Despite repeated requests for humanitarian access for a comprehensive needs assessment across the affected area, the Government has not yet granted permission for this to happen. However, a limited multi-sector assessment was conducted in the southern part of Maungdaw Township in January (see section on Needs Assessment below).

On 3 February, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report based on interviews with 204 Rohingya people who have newly arrived in Bangladesh. The report details allegations of serious human rights abuses. On 27 February, Yanghee Lee, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, completed her mission to Dhaka and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh to assess the situation of arrivals. Based on the findings of her mission, she called on the UN Human Rights Council to create a Commission of Inquiry to examine allegations of abuse in the northern part of Rakhine State. The continued access restrictions and absence of a thorough needs assessment are a major concern in light of reports of serious human rights violations and continued protection risks for civilians in the affected area.

Needs Assessments

A limited Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) was conducted in the southern part of Maungdaw Township in January. However, several challenges were experienced during this process, potentially jeopardizing the accuracy and credibility of the results. Assessment teams were filmed by authorities during two focus group discussions, preventing confidential discussions in some instances. Since international staff were not allowed to access the affected area due to continued movement restrictions, only national staff members were allowed to carry out the assessment. Because of the restrictions on who could participate in the assessment, only a small number of female enumerators were available and not all of the enumerators were trained in child protection. A similar rapid assessment has not been allowed in the northern part of Maungdaw Township.

Food and Nutrition Assistance

Rakhine State has long had one of Myanmar's highest rates of malnutrition, particularly among children. Even before the events of 9 October, Global Acute Malnutrition was above World Health Organization emergency thresholds in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. In this context, the UN and other humanitarian organizations had been supporting more than 150,000 people with regular food and nutrition assistance in northern Rakhine. In the wake of the attacks and subsequent security operations, however, access for the purposes of delivering this assistance was severely restricted and many people missed out on their seasonal food assistance, school feeding and regular nutrition support for three months. All of the 12 out-patient therapeutic feeding centres have reopened (two additional in-patient care facilities had never closed) however the number of patients accessing the therapeutic facilities has still not reached pre-9 October levels. In recent weeks, nutrition support has resumed to pregnant and lactating women, as well as to malnourished young children, in Rathedaung, Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. WFP has just completed its second round of emergency food and nutrition distributions to 55,000 people in the northern part of Maungdaw Township. More than 45,000 people were reached during the first round of distributions.

Despite the resumption of nutrition services in some areas, several concerns remain. Preliminary data from nutrition centres which have re-opened in Maungdaw District shows an increase in people requiring treatment for severe and moderately acute malnutrition (SAM/MAM) in late 2016, compared to the same time in 2015. In more than half of the locations surveyed during the MIRA in the southern part of Maungdaw Township, people indicated nutrition-related problems feeding children under two years. People also identified problems in feeding children including poor motivation to breastfeed, not enough breast milk, reduced meals and food shortages. Nutrition support that is normally delivered to children at schools during term time was suspended for several months because classes were disrupted. Although more than 45,000 students out of 64,000 who benefitted from pre-existing nutrition in schools had been reached by mid-February, the longer-term health consequences of the suspension of nutrition support remain unclear. With the school holidays now beginning, the window for continuing/resuming regular nutrition in schools services has now closed.

Movement Restrictions

Movement restrictions for the stateless Muslim population in northern Rakhine have been in place for decades. This is directly linked to their lack of documentation and discriminatory administrative practices that require the Muslim population to apply for travel authorization to move between villages and townships in northern Rakhine.

Additional restrictions during the period of the security operations had a further impact on the population's access to livelihoods and humanitarian assistance. On 9 February, the curfew that had been in place since October in Maungdaw was extended until 8 April but was reduced by three hours (2100-0500 daily).

Access and movement restrictions remain a key constraint for accessing health care, nutrition support, markets and livelihoods activities. The recent assessment exercise showed that in more than a third of locations in the southern part of Maungdaw Township, fishermen or casual laborers from all communities are not able to fish or work. In addition, significant crop, livestock and equipment losses were also reported.

It has been reported that many people are not travelling out of fear. During the rapid assessment, people in several locations expressed fears about sending their children to school and complained of difficulties accessing schools due to movement restrictions. While humanitarian health services, including some NGO clinics, have resumed in some areas, coverage is inconsistent and humanitarian staff report low patient attendance because people do not feel safe. Humanitarian organizations are currently seeing a little over half of the regular monthly caseload of primary health care patients at clinics in northern Rakhine (12,800 compared to 20,500 prior to 9 October). Emergency medical referrals have been severely impacted, limiting options for treatment and placing patients at risk. Passes to access medical care in Bangladesh are also not being issued.

Concerning documentation, UNHCR reports that the government has attempted to address the lack of documentation held by the stateless Muslim population in recent weeks by renewing efforts to issue residency documents and open a pathway to apply for citizenship. This process is still being largely rejected by the Muslim population due to perceived discrimination which stems from the existing citizenship legal framework. Government officials have clarified that those who obtain residency documents will no longer be required to obtain travel authorization to move between villages and townships in northern Rakhine, while those who remain undocumented will need to continue to apply for travel authorization.

Protection

Most protection activities remain suspended across northern Rakhine despite serious concerns for civilian safety. The testimonies contained in the recent OHCHR report suggest there is likely to be a significant need for psychosocial support services among affected people. The forced removal of fences in many villages by security forces since 9 October on security grounds has also reduced privacy for residents. Immediate action is needed to strengthen protection of civilians in Rakhine and to allow full, unhindered humanitarian access to the affected area, including for international staff.

Shelters and Infrastructure

An analysis of aerial images release by Human Rights Watch in December 2016 identified approximately 1,500 houses which were burnt or destroyed during security operations after 9 October. Shelter pressures have been further compounded by the fact that the Government ordered 1,978 structures, mostly Muslim houses, to be dismantled in the northern part of Rakhine State, claiming that they were erected without proper permission. During December and January 1,078 buildings were dismantled, in many cases by the property owners themselves, in line with Government orders. Following advocacy from humanitarian partners, the Government suspended the process and there have been no further structures dismantled since 10 January. Some schools that have been damaged since 9 October will require repairs before they re-open after the holidays in June. According to the assessment in the southern part of Maungdaw Township, several schools are in need of rehabilitation and support for water/sanitation and fencing. The assessment also reported that half of all assessed locations have insufficient drinking water and that water infrastructure is not functional in many places. A lack of functioning latrines was noted in almost half of all the surveyed locations. Education facilities in Du Chee Yar Tan (South) no longer have functional latrines and water points. The assessment in the southern part of Maungdaw Township also revealed damage to some health facilities.

IDP Returns and Relocations

The Government has begun encouraging some of the internally displaced people in the northern part of Maungdaw to return to their villages of origin. More than 2,000 individuals have returned to Kyee Kan Pyin (Middle) village since late February. This return was authorized by the Border Guard Police (BGP) Brigadier General. However, a number of conditions were set, including that houses could only be renovated and that construction of new houses

would not be permitted. A return assessment was carried out by humanitarian organizations on 28 February. More than 60 houses were confirmed to be damaged, burnt or destroyed in the village. The main needs identified include food, non-food relief items, sanitary kits, livelihoods support and basic household items which are missing due to reported looting. Following the assessment, non-food relief items were distributed by UNHCR to 270 returnee families on 1 March. Across northern Rakhine, UNHCR has delivered non-food relief items to more than 20,000 people. Solutions for others who have been displaced are yet to be found.

Funding and In-Kind Assistance

Central Emergency Response Fund: A CERF Rapid Response Application to address urgent new needs in northern Rakhine totalling US\$ 4.4 million has been approved by the CERF Secretariat. The four proposals cover food, health, protection and non-food items, psychosocial support and gender based violence.

Myanmar Humanitarian Fund: On 21 February 2017, the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) launched its First Reserve Allocation (\$2.5 million) for 2017. This call-for-proposals is open until 13 March and aims to fund projects focused on ensuring a timely and effective life-saving response to critical humanitarian needs in Rakhine (northern and central).

Assistance from Malaysia and Indonesia: A ship from Malaysia arrived in Yangon on 9 February carrying food aid and other relief items for distribution in Rakhine. Distribution of this aid began on 25 February and has reached more than 195,000 people from Muslim, Rakhine and other ethnic minority groups. Aid from Indonesia, including food and clothes, has already been distributed by the Government to some 99,000 people across 24 Village Tracts in the northern part of Maungdaw Township, according to information provided by the Rakhine State Government.

Government Assistance: The Government has also been providing assistance in the affected area but the UN does not have full details of all Government support. Further information on Government assistance can be obtained directly from the Government.

For further information, please contact:

Mark Cutts, Head of OCHA, Myanmar, cutts@un.org, Tel: +95 97 97 002 714

Danielle Parry, Public Information Officer, parryd@un.org, Tel: +95 (0) 9797007816

Pierre Peron, Public Information Officer, peronp@un.org, Tel: +95 979 700 7815, Cell: +95 9250 198 997

For more information, please visit www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int: www.facebook.com/ochamyanmar | www.unocha.org/myanmar |