

## BANGLADESH

## EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR REFUGEES

Bangladesh is experiencing one of the worst humanitarian crises in its history due to the unprecedented influx of refugees from Myanmar. In 3 months, more than 600,000 refugees have arrived, escaping horrific violence.

In Myanmar's Rakhine State, conflict involving the military and the Muslim minority has led to more than 60 percent of the population of northern Rakhine State fleeing their country—and the numbers continue to rise. The violence they have endured, reportedly by Myanmar government forces, is described by the United Nations as “textbook ethnic cleansing.” Tens of thousands are internally displaced and are reportedly trying to flee.

At least 120,000 members of the Muslim minority group are in camps in central Rakhine State, where they have been since 2012. They are dependent on humanitarian aid and are unable to leave due to government restrictions.

The needs of the Rohingya refugees are dire. They arrive in Bangladesh hungry, exhausted and depleted of any resources. Boats cross the Naf River with families, children, the elderly and people who have spent significant funds to pay for the crossing. Many have faced horrific torture and lost loved ones, including children, in the violence. Their escape often involved fleeing a direct attack, watching their houses burn, hiding in the bush for days as they walked, going hungry, and crossing rivers filled with bodies. The human needs—emotional and physical—are immense. Children make up more than half of the Rohingya refugees.

Refugees are living in crowded, unsanitary camps, completely dependent on aid to meet their most basic needs. By the time they reach the camps, families have used most of their savings on their transportation and shelters, often made out of no more than bamboo and recycled plastic sheets.



At Shabrang Harbor in Teknaf on the Bangladesh border, Rohingya refugees gather after arriving by boat from Myanmar. Photo by Mahmud Raman for CRS/Caritas Bangladesh

In Myanmar, humanitarian access to northern Rakhine State is extremely limited, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without any help, and in crucial need of protection. There are widespread reports of burned villages, extrajudicial killing and crimes against humanity.

The ethnic Rakhine community, the majority of the population of Rakhine State, suffers from a lack of access to services, and poverty worsened by conflict. The lack of international assistance risks further entrenching the area in poverty.

Whether the Rohingya people will be granted refugee status and given the opportunity to support themselves in Bangladesh has yet to be determined. The likelihood of a peaceful return to Myanmar—what many refugees describe as their preference—is also unknown. “The uncertainty,” as one refugee said, “is eating away at us.”

#### Watch these recent bulletins from camps in Bangladesh:

- [Arrival of refugees at the border](#)
- [Food distribution](#)

**“There were a lot of people like me who couldn’t afford the boat fare, and we were very hungry. I think many must have died there from hunger.”**

**Sanamula, Thangkhal Camp, speaking about the people he left behind at the Myanmar border before taking a boat to Bangladesh**

## CRS SUPPORT OF CARITAS BANGLADESH

**BANGLADESH:** CRS is supporting *Caritas Bangladesh* as it provides relief to Rohingya refugees across camps in Cox’s Bazar. Emergency support includes a 2-month supply of food, along with kitchen sets, for 10,000 families—68,000 people. There are plans for ongoing assistance, including food, emergency shelter, living supplies, water and sanitation, protection services, and potentially design and infrastructure support for new camps. In coordination with other actors, Caritas will provide integrated shelter, WASH, protection

and site development assistance to 1,500 families at one of the identified sites. Caritas is procuring living supplies—such as floor mats, bedding and clothes—to assist 10,200 households.

**MYANMAR:** CRS is supporting the national Caritas and its 16 dioceses with emergency and development programs, including those for conflict-affected people in Kachin and northern Shan states. Neither CRS nor Caritas are working in Rakhine State, as CRS does not have permission from the Myanmar government to do so.