

Press release: Bangladesh refugee camps and Rakhine State devastated by Cyclone Mocha according to affected communities, including Rohingya

Cyclone Mocha left a trail of devastation in the Bangladesh refugee camps and Rakhine State according to a [press conference](#) held today by Women's Peace Network, and led by members of the affected communities in Bangladesh's Kutupalong refugee camp and Rakhine State's Maungdaw and Sittwe townships.

The category-five, severe cyclonic storm - one of the most powerful to [hit](#) Bangladesh and Myanmar in decades - caused [floods](#) and [landslides](#), widespread [destruction](#) of infrastructure, [injuries](#), and [deaths](#).

"The damages are so severe. For the nearly one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the cyclone exacerbated their already deteriorating access to livelihoods, safety, and protection in the camps. In Myanmar, among areas including Chin State and Sagaing and Magway regions, Rakhine State was disproportionately affected. Reports are surfacing on the widespread destruction of the area's townships and now the deaths of hundreds of Rohingya, especially internally displaced persons. None of the affected communities have access to life-saving support," said Wai Wai Nu, WPN's Founder and Executive Director.

Comprehensive humanitarian assistance must be immediately provided to the affected communities. As was shared in the conference, the Bangladesh refugee camps and Rakhine State still lack proper access to emergency relief, including food, water, and shelters. This is despite the cyclone's [destruction](#) of the shelters and essential facilities for thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, as well as its [razing](#) of villages and IDP camps in Rakhine State.

"All of the people are not getting help. They are suffering from trauma again," said the conference's speaker from Bangladesh's Kutupalong refugee camp, which is currently [beset](#) by an exacerbating food crisis.

The aftermath of Cyclone Mocha must not result in further displacement or death. According to the conference's speaker from Sittwe, an estimated 400 Rohingya have died as a result of the cyclone; this number has yet to be fully verified at least in part [due](#) to the region's inaccessibility, including [cuts](#) to its communication lines. In this context, a search-and-rescue mission must immediately be sent to the area; an assessment on the precise causes of the deaths - especially of Rohingya - should also be conducted.

Sustainable and durable forms of assistance must also be provided to the affected communities, including for the construction of their destroyed homes and camp infrastructure, as well as for their long-term rehabilitation.

The conference's speakers in Rakhine State also urged the international community to ensure that its assistance will be directly provided to the affected communities - not the Myanmar junta. Reports on the junta's response to Cyclone Mocha have begun to surface, revealing that the junta [sabotaged](#) evacuation efforts of the Rohingya IDPs and has since [blocked](#) aid access to their camps and surrounding areas. Such findings, among many others, are in line with the junta's acts to further [entrench](#) the apartheid in Rakhine State following its February 1, 2021 attempted coup.

Wai Wai Nu called for greater support to local community-based organizations and civil society, many of which are - unlike the junta - expertly delivering humanitarian aid to far-reaching areas.

“As an ethnic Rakhine, I urge the international community to directly support all the affected communities in the region with a long-term plan. The Myanmar junta has been lying to the whole world and burning the country down. So the junta will not tell any truth about the affected situation in Rakhine State to the outside world,” said the conference's speaker from Maungdaw.

Humanitarian aid must not be weaponized against any community in Myanmar. In the press conference, serious concerns were raised about the junta committing this very act in Rakhine State: controlling the provision of life-saving support to obtain full control and power over civilians - and legitimacy and authority in Myanmar - since the attempted coup. The catastrophe [following](#) Cyclone Nargis must not be repeated at all costs.

According to many of the speakers, the international community's lack of preparation for Cyclone Mocha - a *“convenient negligence”* - was one of the key factors that brought about the crisis imperiling the Bangladesh refugee camps and Rakhine State today. For example, “awareness-raising” campaigns on cyclones were provided to the refugees just before Mocha's arrival and, in Sittwe, were not conducted in the Rohingya language.

United Nations agencies including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, international non-governmental organizations, and other members of the international community must ensure that - in the Bangladesh refugee camps, Rakhine State, Myanmar and beyond - all at-risk communities are given the respect, attention, and life-saving actions that they truly deserve.

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