

Press Release

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS SUSPENDED IN CYCLONE-RAVAGED RAKHINE STATE

(Myanmar, 12 June 2023) – One month after Cyclone Mocha hit western Myanmar with brutal force, the State Administration Council has suspended humanitarian access in Rakhine State, crippling life-saving aid distributions to affected communities.

“Four weeks into this disaster response and with the monsoon season well underway, it is unfathomable that humanitarians are being denied access to support people in need,” UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i Ramanathan Balakrishnan said.

Since the cyclone hit on 14 May, humanitarians have been reaching a growing number of people with aid using limited travel authorizations granted to organizations with long-standing operations in Rakhine. More than 110,000 people across the affected areas have received shelter and other relief items, while food assistance has reached almost 300,000 people in Rakhine alone. This new access decision suspends that assistance, paralyzing the humanitarian response.

“This decision is yet another devastating setback for more than a million people whom humanitarians had planned to reach with life-saving assistance in cyclone-hit Rakhine state over the weeks and months ahead. Just when vulnerable communities need our help the most, we have been forced to stop distributions of food, drinking water, and shelter supplies,” Mr. Balakrishnan said.

Since the cyclone, humanitarians have had extensive discussions to scale up assistance in Rakhine and other cyclone-affected areas. After significant engagement at both Nay Pyi Taw and regional level, initial approval for distribution and transportation plans and additional travel authorization was received for wider distributions in June. This has since been rescinded, pending further clearances. Similar plans for distribution and transportation in Chin also remain pending.

“This denial of access unnecessarily prolongs the suffering of those without food to eat or a roof over their head. It increases the risk of food insecurity and water-borne disease,” Mr. Balakrishnan said. “On behalf of humanitarian actors, I urge the State Administration Council to urgently reconsider this decision and re-instate the initial approval that was granted for distributions which will allow aid that is ready and waiting to flow to people who desperately need it.”

On 23 May, humanitarians launched a [US\\$333 million Flash Appeal](#) for donor support to reach 1.6 million people affected by Cyclone Mocha in Rakhine, Chin, Sagaing, Magway and Kachin. To date, just \$10.3m has been received.

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