

PRESS RELEASE

Lack of access and funding hampering aid to 18 million people in Myanmar, UN Humanitarian Chief Martin Griffiths says following visit to the country

(Myanmar, 17 August 2023) – Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths today called for expanded humanitarian access and increased funding to assist the 18 million people in need of aid across Myanmar.

“Successive crises in Myanmar have left one third of the population in need of humanitarian aid,” Griffiths said at the end of a three-day visit to the country. “They expect more and better from their leaders and from the international community.”

Humanitarian needs in Myanmar have surged in recent years, with the number of displaced persons increasing fivefold in less than three years, from 380,000 at the start of 2021 to 1.9 million at present.

During the visit, Griffiths met with families affected by conflict and natural disasters, including with Rakhine and Rohingya communities and with Myanmar authorities.

Griffiths visited Rakhine state, still reeling from the impact of cyclone Mocha three months ago. The cyclone flattened homes, damaged displacement camps, destroyed farmland, and killed livestock, leaving thousands of people vulnerable.

“Families are struggling to cope after the successive blows of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and cyclone Mocha. We stand ready to do more both in Rakhine and nationwide, but we urgently need greater access and more funding to do so.”

In the capital Nay Pyi Taw, Griffiths met with the State Administration Council Chairman, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, with whom he discussed what humanitarians need to scale-up direct aid to affected populations in areas affected by conflict and natural disasters.

“My meetings were an opportunity to raise the need for expanded access,” Griffiths said. “I also expressed my concerns about the protection risks facing civilians in conflict areas and the bureaucratic constraints we humanitarians are facing in reaching them. It is critical for us to have the humanitarian space we need for safe, sustained aid deliveries around the country,” Griffiths said.

Despite rising needs, the humanitarian operation in Myanmar is facing a huge resource gap with just 22 per cent of required funds received more than half-way through the year.

“Over the past three days, I spoke with brave aid workers about their efforts to help those in need. However, a severe lack of funding means aid agencies are forced to make tough decisions about cutting assistance at a time when they should be scaling up even further. This needs to change,” Griffiths said.

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