

URGENT ACTION

STILL NO ACCESS TO AID FOR 130,000 IN NORTH RAKHINE

At least 130,000 people are still being denied access to life-saving humanitarian services, more than two months after the Myanmar authorities began major security operations in northern Rakhine State. The UN has warned that lives are at risk if the government does not immediately act to restore access for humanitarian aid organizations.

Unknown assailants attacked three border police posts in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar on 9 October 2016, seizing weapons and killing nine police officers. The authorities consequently launched a major security operation, to apprehend the attackers, and suspended humanitarian access to northern Rakhine State affecting 150,000 people. The majority of those affected are from the ethnic Rohingya minority, who had been reliant on these services. To date, around 20,000 people have had their aid partially restored and, in early December, the UN was able to participate in a limited distribution of necessities to a number of villages. Nevertheless, for more than two months now 130,000 people have been without their normal food, cash and nutrition assistance.

An additional 30,000 people are believed to have been displaced by security operations in North Maungdaw Township and other than a one-off delivery by the UN in November, of a two week supply of food to 7, 200 people, no humanitarian organisations have been granted access to the affected area. Due to current restrictions on movement, most people are also unable to access primary healthcare services.

The security operations have been marked by human rights violations, with state security forces using disproportionate force and indiscriminate attacks, rape and sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, the destruction of property and looting against the Rohingya population.

Please write immediately in English, Burmese or your own language calling on the Myanmar authorities to:

- Instruct members of the security forces to immediately cease all violations of international human rights law;
- Immediately allow humanitarian organizations full and unfettered access to all parts of northern Rakhine State, allowing them to provide support to newly displaced people and to resume all pre-existing services;
- Initiate an impartial and independent investigation into allegations of human rights violations by the security forces, assisted by the UN. Where sufficient evidence is gathered, those suspected of responsibility for crimes – including those with command responsibility – should be brought to justice in trials which meet international standards of fairness, without recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 JANUARY 2017 TO:

Commander-in-Chief
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Ministry of Defence, Office 24
Nay Pyi Taw,
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 (0) 67404299
Email:
adsom.myanmar@mptmail.net.mm or
admmewg.myanmar@mptmail.net.mm
Salutation: Dear Senior General

State Counsellor
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Office No. 9
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: + 95 (0) 67412396
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Dr. Win Myat Aye
Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and
Resettlement
Office No. 23
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: + 95 (67) 404 335
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY KYAW ZWAR MINN , Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 19A Charles Street, London W1J 5DX, General Office 020 7148 0740 / 020 7499 4340, Ambassador's Office 020 7148 0749, ambassadoroffice@myanmarembassylondon.com, political@myanmarembassylondon.com, generalenquiries@myanmarembassylondon.com, salutation: Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 256/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/5133/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Northern Rakhine State – the name commonly given to the townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung - is situated in the west of Myanmar and borders Bangladesh. It is populated mainly by the Rohingya minority, but also by other ethnic minorities such as the Buddhist Rakhines. The Rohingya have faced decades of repression and discrimination. This includes severe restrictions on their movement, impacting their ability to access healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities.

The situation in northern Rakhine State has deteriorated significantly since 9 October 2016 when unknown assailants attacked three police outposts in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine State, killing nine Border Guard Police officers and seizing weapons and ammunition. The authorities responded by accusing Rohingya groups of responsibility and by initiating a major security operation, conducting sweeps of the area to find the perpetrators and uncover the stolen weapons.

Government officials in Myanmar have repeatedly denied reports of human rights violations by the security forces, claiming that they have been fabricated to gain international support. However, in the last month large numbers of Rohingyas have fled Myanmar for Bangladesh. The UN estimates that since early November almost 27,000 people have fled crossing the border from northern Rakhine State into Bangladesh.

The Myanmar government's refusal to allow humanitarian access to displaced communities directly contravenes international human rights standards, which provide that such access should be "rapid and unimpeded". The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are clear that national authorities "have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction", which they should provide without discrimination of any kind, including on the grounds of race, religion, national or ethnic origin and legal status.

Further information on UA: 256/16 Index: ASA 16/5341/2016 Issue Date: 15 December 2016