



THE EUROPEAN ROHINGYA COUNCIL (ERC)

ဥရောပရောက်ရှိဟင်္ဂလိပ်များကောင်စီ

ERC calls for urgent humanitarian assistance, thorough investigation and concrete measure to prevent frequent fire in Rohingya refugee camps

Immediate Release

March 24, 2021

The European Rohingya Council (ERC) is deeply saddened with the news of devastating blaze which ravaged through Balukhali Refugee Camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. We are also extremely concerned about the wellbeing of tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees who have been displaced in the camp.

Monday's blaze which reportedly started from Camp 8W before spreading to three more camps, is considered to be the biggest fire that raged through Rohingya refugee camps since the persecuted community has taken shelters on the soil of Bangladesh.

The results of the blaze are catastrophic – more than 15 Rohingya have died which is expected to rise dramatically; over 500 have been injured; at least 400 are still missing; 45,000 Rohingya or 10,000 families have lost their shelters as of March 23.

It has also destroyed hospitals, clinics, learning centres and schools, women-friendly spaces, shops and places of worship, which are essential for tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees.

Despite the efforts from many volunteers and refugees, the fire has continued to sweep through the camps from 3:00 PM local time to midnight.

The conditions of refugee camps are the recipe for disastrous fire. The building materials of Rohingya refugee shanty homes, the usage of gas cylinders for cooking, the over-crowdedness, the inadequate fire safety training, the lack of Fire Evacuation Plan, the difficult access for fire vehicles and emergency evacuation, contribute fire to spread quickly and violently.

Moreover, the installation of barbed wire fencing between blocks and camps by the Bangladesh authorities to limit the movement of Rohingya refugees have made conditions worse for the refugees to safely evacuate and flee from dangerous fires. The latest catastrophe has proven the fencing to be counterproductive and ERC firmly believed that many lives could have been saved if no such fence were erected.

Over the past year, there has been an increase in the frequency of fire in the refugee camps with detrimental loss of lives, sustained injuries and destruction of essential facilities. Despite conducting investigations by the authorities, there have been no positive outcomes or measures to prevent further outbreaks of fire.

 Head Office

Geldershoofd 905, 1103 BG Amsterdam, The Netherland

Registered Number: KVK- 56454791

Tel: +49 177 8080834



THE EUROPEAN ROHINGYA COUNCIL (ERC)

ဥရောပရောက်ရှိဟင်္ဂလိပ်များကောင်စီ

The Rohingya community has experienced fires that were used as a scorched-earth tactic by the Myanmar Armed Forces to destroy over 390 Rohingya villages during Myanmar's campaign of genocide between 2016 and 2017.

The March 22 fire in Balukhali Refugee Camp revisits the survivors of genocide to the painful memories which still leave deep scars in their bodies and minds. Now they have witnessed children, men, women and vulnerable ones died in a preventable fire while many parents are screaming for their missing children.

We call upon the government of Bangladesh to conduct a thorough investigation with the involvement of independent teams and the Rohingya and international communities. According to the information we have gathered, this fire has all the hallmarks of arson because fire mysteriously started in different locations simultaneously, some in the opposite direction of the wind of the area. It is therefore vital that the outcomes of the investigation are made public in order to safeguard the wellbeing of the Rohingya refugees.

We also urge the international community, and local and international NGOs to assist Bangladesh in the recovery and rebuilding of the Rohingya community affected by the fire and continue to stand and show compassion to the victims of the catastrophic fire.

For more information:

Dr. Ambia Perveen

Chairperson

The European Rohingya Council

info@theerc.eu

 Head Office

Geldershoofd 905, 1103 BG Amsterdam, The Netherland

Registered Number: KVK- 56454791

Tel: +49 177 8080834