

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Dear Prime Minister Hasina,

We write to thank you for your strong leadership on behalf of Rohingya men, women, and children who continue to flee violence in Myanmar to seek refuge in Bangladesh. Your Government has responded with great skill and generosity to one of the largest ongoing humanitarian crises in the world. We note with appreciation your commitment to the critical work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in coordinating relief efforts on the ground.

However, we are deeply concerned about your Government's agreement with the Government of Myanmar to repatriate all Rohingya refugees over a two-year period in the coming months. While we support efforts to ensure Rohingya refugees can exercise their right to return to their villages in Myanmar if they so choose, we believe that the conditions for voluntary, safe, and dignified returns are currently absent. Rohingya refugees should not be sent to hastily built "temporary or transit camps" in Myanmar before returning to their villages becomes possible. This is highly problematic because these camps are guarded by the same Myanmar forces who perpetrated crimes that amounted to ethnic cleansing and forced the Rohingya to flee in the first place. We therefore strongly encourage you to heed the recommendations of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on January 16, 2018 and ensure that UNHCR plays a central role in any repatriation process and that a voluntary, sustainable, and safe plan for returns is in place. The Canadian Government's Special Envoy to Myanmar has also highlighted that it would be "unconscionable" for members of the UN to allow a repatriation process that does not guarantee the basic protection of human security and human rights.

We also urge your government to consider taking several modest steps to help bolster the current humanitarian response. First, we request that you provide non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with longer-term registration, ideally for at least 6 months, which would allow them to increase the quality and quantity of their assistance. Second, we encourage you to expedite the registration and approval process for NGOs filling critical gaps in the response to urgent needs such as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and protection. Third, we urge you to encourage support for efforts to provide all school-aged Rohingya children with access to appropriate educational curriculum. Finally, recognizing the Government of Bangladesh's expertise in disaster preparedness and risk reduction, we encourage greater efforts to improve infrastructure in refugee camps to address the threats of flooding and mudslides from the coming monsoon season, which will place hundreds of thousands of refugees at immediate serious risk.

We would like to extend our deep appreciation to you and your Government for your generosity and sustained efforts to host and protect vulnerable Rohingya refugees who have fled the Myanmar military's campaign of ethnic cleansing. We remain strongly committed to assisting the government and people of Bangladesh as you face this difficult and complex challenge.

Sincerely,