

In Bangladesh, UNHCR’s Grandi calls for sustained support and solutions for Rohingya refugees

DHAKA – The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, underscored UNHCR’s unwavering commitment to supporting 1 million Rohingya refugees hosted in Bangladesh as he completed a four-day visit to the country on Sunday.

In a meeting with the country’s Chief Advisor, Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Grandi commended the people of Bangladesh for their generosity in hosting the refugees for nearly eight years.

“Bangladesh has been an extraordinary host since the onset of the crisis, with local communities having shared the few resources they had with refugees,” said Grandi. “A dignified, voluntary, safe and sustainable return to Myanmar remains the primary solution to this crisis. Efforts to achieve this goal by helping create conditions for return to the areas of origin of the refugees, and the peaceful coexistence of communities living there, must be stepped up and supported.”

Visiting the Kutupalong refugee camps near Cox’s Bazar, Grandi urged the international community to provide sustained financial support for the refugees, who live in highly challenging circumstances – vulnerable to natural disasters and almost entirely reliant on humanitarian aid for their basic needs.

“With the passing of time and in the absence of a solution for Rohingya refugees for now, mobilizing resources remains both challenging and a priority,” Grandi said, urging partners not to forget Rohingya refugees. “If international support decreases dramatically – which may happen – the huge work done by the Bangladesh government, aid agencies and refugees themselves will be seriously impacted, putting thousands at risk of hunger, disease and insecurity.”

In Cox’s Bazar, the High Commissioner spoke to refugees who had recently arrived in the camps after fleeing the ongoing violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine State. Intense conflict there in recent times has worsened the plight of the Rohingya, leaving many with no choice but to risk the journey to safety in Bangladesh.

Grandi also sat down with community-based groups like imams, female religious teachers, and a group of mothers concerned about the violence in the camps. With few prospects for meaningful self-development and self-reliance, violence, crime, and other security issues have risen in the community.

“All shared with me their longing to return to their homes, when the conditions for return are safe and allow for voluntary sustainable repatriation,” he said. “It is very important to support Bangladesh’s efforts to maintain security in the camps. We must also continue programmes for the most vulnerable, particularly women who have survived violence, and help young people to gain skills and resilience.”

Speaking to young refugees at a skills training centre, the High Commissioner remarked on the need to strengthen livelihood and development opportunities inside the camps, where 52 per cent of the population are under 18.

“They are trying to acquire skills, to get an education,” Grandi said. “They are trying to utilize the talents that they have to serve their community. If international assistance dwindles, their horizon becomes further limited. We must do our best to keep their hopes alive.”

The camps in Cox’s Bazar and on the island of Bhasan Char are, like the communities that host them, highly susceptible to cyclones, flooding, landslides and other weather shocks, including the risk of fire. Having witnessed the devastating consequences of a major landslide on the refugees, Grandi highlighted the need for core support for disaster risk reduction during meetings with Government partners.

This is the High Commissioner’s sixth visit to the country. It comes as UNHCR, together with the Government of Bangladesh and other humanitarian partners, prepares to launch the 2025 Joint Response Plan detailing the humanitarian needs of Rohingya refugees and their host communities. In recent years, funding has remained a critical challenge, with previous response plans being insufficiently funded.

“Nowhere more than in the Cox’s Bazar camps is the life-saving role of humanitarian aid clear,” Grandi said in a post on X reflecting on his visit.

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