

PLACE

Dhaka

DATE

13 August 2023

In Bangladesh, OIC and humanitarian partners call for sustained support for Rohingya refugees and host communities



A delegation from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), joined by representatives from the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Kuwait's Zakat House successfully concluded a solidarity visit to Bangladesh on Thursday 10 August. The mission was organized and co-led by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, within the framework of the OIC-UNHCR partnership Plan of Action concluded in 2022.

The visit shed light on the worsening humanitarian situation and compounded needs of Rohingya refugees and their hosts in the district of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh as the situation approaches the six -year mark of the unprecedented 2017 influx of Rohingya from Rakhine State in Myanmar.

The delegation visited several programmes supported by UNHCR and partners and observed the acute needs of the refugees and their hosts. They also witnessed how opportunities can be created for both communities to reduce reliance on aid and advance livelihoods through skills development and capacity-building programmes in community centers. The visit came during a period of heavy monsoon rains that had caused severe damage to shelters, facilities and infrastructure adding to the predicament of the already fragile displaced communities. The delegation witnessed firsthand UNHCR's disaster risk management and preparedness activities aimed at mitigating climate-related risks and averting a further deterioration of living conditions caused by adverse weather.

Assistant Secretary General of the OIC, Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakheet, commended the Government and people of Bangladesh for their generosity in hosting one of the most vulnerable refugee populations in the world. Notably, he lauded the initiatives undertaken to facilitate access by Rohingya children to the Myanmar curriculum in the Myanmar

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language in the learning centers in the camps in preparation of voluntarily return and reintegration in their ancestral society in Myanmar. “I call on all countries, especially the Member States of the OIC, to continue showing solidarity by generously supporting the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian partners in responding to the pressing needs of the Rohingya population and their hosts. The diplomatic track must advance hand in hand with humanitarian efforts to deal with the root causes of the problem and reach a permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis in accordance with the OIC’s relevant resolutions” he added.

Efforts to bring about solutions to the Rohingya crisis must remain the primary objective of the response. The voluntary return of the Rohingya in safety and dignity to Myanmar and their sustainable reintegration remains the priority. Refugees’ enhanced resilience in the camps and resettlement, educational and labor opportunities in third countries should also be sought as part of a comprehensive approach to solutions.

“We thank the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for its commitment to and solidarity with the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh”, said Johannes van der Klaauw, the UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh. “The Rohingya response is facing a severe funding crisis, illustrated by two recent cuts in food assistance. There is an urgent need to invest in collective efforts to allow Rohingya to become self-reliant as they cannot, and do not wish to, remain dependent on humanitarian aid”.

For his part, UNHCR Senior Advisor and Representative to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, Khaled Khalifa, highlighted the importance of collective responsibility sharing in aiding the most vulnerable and thanked the partners for their continued trust and commitment to bolstering humanitarian response efforts. “We hope this visit will result in enhanced political and humanitarian support to Bangladesh which hosts close to 1 million Rohingya refugees in the largest refugee camp in the world,” he said.

Earlier this year, humanitarian agencies in Bangladesh appealed for \$876 million to support Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char and Bangladeshi host communities. As of 6 August, the 2023 Joint Response Plan was only 28% funded, forcing agencies to focus only on the most critical needs.

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