

Nearly 7,000 Rohingya refugees homeless as fire blazes through camp in Cox's Bazar



Credit: Sayed Karim, refugee volunteer

Cox's Bazar, 7 January 2024 – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its humanitarian partners are scrambling to respond to the latest devastating fire that ravaged through Camp 5, one of the 33 camps in Cox's Bazar that make the largest refugee camp in the world.

Nearly 800 shelters are feared to have been destroyed in the first large fire of 2024, which started around 01:00 in the morning on 7 January and was brought under control by 4 am. Additionally, some 93 shelters were partially damaged, and around 120 facilities, including learning centres, mosques, healthcare centres, latrines and bathing facilities, water points and solar street lights, have also been destroyed or damaged by the inferno.

So far, there have been **no casualties** reported yet as a result of the fire.

Refugee volunteers were first to respond to the blaze, with community volunteers trained on firefighting supported by Bangladeshi authorities, UNHCR, IOM, and local firefighters from the host community in nearby Ukhiya. Specialized three-wheeled Mobile Firefighting Units and water pumps which had been earlier provided by UNHCR were quickly deployed from other camps. Water was also drawn from the water network of WASH partners as well as nearby streams and ponds to extinguish the fire. Fire corridors, created by removing shelters in the immediate vicinity of the fire during the blaze, ensured the flames did not spread further within the camp.

Refugees displaced by the fire are temporarily taking shelter within the camp's community centres, including in temporary communal shelters, and are provided with emergency food assistance including fortified biscuits and hot meals. Bangladeshi authorities and humanitarian agencies are on site to assist the people affected in the fire with emergency support, medical and psychological first aid, and linking refugees with other relevant services as required.

In the aftermath of the fire, the Bangladeshi authorities and UNHCR, in coordination with IOM and other UN and NGO partners, as well as refugee volunteers are supporting the Rohingya refugees who lost their shelters and belongings in the devastating blaze during cold weather of the winter season, and assess further needs.

The cause of the fire currently remains unknown, and we are assured by the Government authorities that an investigation into the cause of the fire will be carried out.



Credit: Mohammed Kayas, refugee volunteer



Credit: Anowar Kamal, refugee volunteer



Credit: Eahsan, refugee volunteer

For further details, please contact:

Mostafa Mohammad Sazzad Hossain, Assistant Communications Officer, hossaimo@unhcr.org

Shari Yasmin Nijman, Communications Officer, nijman@unhcr.org