



[A Fire Destroys Hundreds of Homes in a Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Camp](#)

A recent fire in a Bangladesh Rohingya refugee camp erupted and spread through the site, destroying approximately 1,200 homes and leaving more than 5,000 refugees and survivors of genocide without shelter. The conflagration lasted for about two hours and the cause has not been determined. The refugee camp is one of many in Bangladesh that Rohingya refugees, mostly from Myanmar, have been forced to call home. Fires like this are not uncommon there; refugees living in the camp have stated that they tend to occur regularly and that the lack of accessible water nearby often makes extinguishing them difficult. The camp is in an area of Bangladesh where more than 1 million Rohingya refugees have been living since 2017, with the largest camp holding nearly 700,000 people. Observers have expressed concern as this is the second fire in a week; the first destroyed a medical facility and COVID-19 treatment center in the camp. Additionally, in March of last year, another fire also consumed 10,000 shacks in a Rohingya refugee camp, the largest such camp in the world, resulting in the death of over a dozen people and the displacement of a further close to 50,000.

The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority group with ties to Rakhine State in Myanmar. Severe levels of persecution of the Rohingya took place in 2016 and 2017 at the hands of Myanmar's military, and led to the outbreak of a major displacement crisis. This forced nearly 800,000 people to flee into the haven of neighboring Bangladesh. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Save the Children have estimated that the number of Rohingya who survived and fled the military killings grew in fact to over 1 million. The International Criminal Court has heard cases which viably allege that the killings were systematic and qualified as genocide, and ultimately United Nations investigators have concluded that the military persecution was conducted with clear "genocidal intent."

Unsurprisingly, the Myanmar military – which has also now come under fire over the past year for its coup and brutal crackdown against civilians – has denied accusations of genocide and proclaims that the military operation against the Rohingya was conducted as part of a "counter-terrorism operation." The largest areas where the Rohingya had lived was part of coastal Myanmar, locations that have since undergone development of harbors and ports being utilized by China. The Chinese government also continues to support the Myanmar military during its violent suppression of anti-coup and pro-democracy protestors, while the United Nations and most countries have initiated sanctions and arms embargoes against the military for its behavior.

Bangladesh was applauded for its humanitarian courage to accept the Rohingya refugees, but since then has not received sufficient international support to find permanent homes for the survivors of genocide. Only non-permanent shelters are allowed in the camps and these are unfortunately made of extremely flammable materials. In overcrowded camps fenced with barbed wire, lacking sufficient water to fight fires, and buildings constructed of flammable materials, the risk of disaster is ever-present and always high. As a result, substantial numbers of Rohingya refugees have attempted to sail to countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Hundreds of Rohingya attempted to travel to Indonesia just in the preceding year after a renewed campaign of killing by the Myanmar military.