

P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

One child killed and 1,000 children left homeless as fire rips through Rohingya refugee camp

Cox's Bazar, 8 March 2022 – A six-year-old boy has been killed and an estimated 2,000 people have been left homeless – including 1,000 children – by the sixth fire this year to tear through the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, says Save the Children.

The fire raced through camp 5 of the world's largest refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar at around 4.30 p.m. local time on Tuesday afternoon, destroying 400 shelters, which for almost five years have been the closest thing to home for Rohingya families fleeing Myanmar.

This follows a massive fire in January, which destroyed 1,200 shelters and left more than 5,000 people homeless, and four smaller fires between January and March. Some of the families who lost their homes are staying with relatives in the same camp area, while others have been displaced to nearby camps. Eight volunteers working with Save the Children also lost their homes in the blaze.

Save the Children is providing psychological first aid, food, medical support and reunifying children separated from their families during the fire.

"We have nothing left, everything burnt to ashes in the fire," said 13-year-old Fahim*, whose family lost their shelter and all their possessions in the blaze.

Save the Children is concerned that the fire could trigger distressing memories for children, many of whom saw their homes set alight in Myanmar. In a survey conducted by Save the Children in August last year, about 73% of Save the Children staff said children they worked with referred to traumatic experiences in Myanmar when talking about more recent events in the camps, including fires.

Save the Children's Country Director in Bangladesh, Onno van Manen, said:

"This is the sixth fire to tear through Cox's Bazar in less than three months. Year on year, we're seeing a huge increase in the number of fires in the camps – and the risk is only going to go up as the climate crisis worsens.

"No one should have to watch the few belongings they own be reduced to wreckage. These camps were supposed to be a safe haven for refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar. Events like these are incredibly distressing for children, and Save the Children is providing them with the emotional support they need to recover.

"The shelters made of dry bamboo and tarpaulin are incredibly flammable. More fire-resistant materials must be permitted and additional openings in the fencing need to be built so that refugees can reach safety in an emergency. The risk of fires in these densely populated and confined areas is enormous, but it is avoidable with the right support and infrastructure in place."

According to the Inter Sector Coordination Group Daily Incident Reporting, there were over 150 fires in the camps in 2021 – a staggering 180% increase on the 84 fires seen in 2020.

Save the Children is calling on the international community to financially support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh while pursuing a long-term solution to the Rohingya crisis that addresses its root causes and allows for safe, dignified, and voluntary returns of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar when it is safe to do so.

**Names have been changed due to security and privacy reasons.*

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.