

Statement from ERC Martin Griffiths regarding the increasing violence and humanitarian need in Myanmar

The humanitarian situation in Myanmar is deteriorating. Across the country, there are now more than 3 million people in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance because of growing conflict and insecurity, COVID-19 and a failing economy. Without an end to violence and a peaceful resolution of Myanmar's crisis, this number will only rise.

Since the 1 February military takeover, hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes due to violence across the country, and 223,000 people remain internally displaced. This includes 165,000 in the south-east of the country and is on top of a significant population of people who were already displaced in Rakhine, Chin, Shan and Kachin states prior to the takeover.

Long-term displacement remains unresolved, with 144,000 Rohingya people still confined to camps and camp-like settings in Rakhine, many since their displacement in 2012, and more than 105,000 people displaced in Kachin and Shan, many for years. I am also increasingly concerned about reports of rising levels of food insecurity in and around urban areas, including in Yangon and Mandalay.

In recent weeks, the situation in the north-west of the country has become extremely concerning, with an escalation in hostilities between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Chinland Defence Force in Chin state, and with the People's Defence Forces in Magway and Sagaing regions. More than 37,000 people, including women and children, have been newly displaced, and more than 160 homes have been burned, including churches and the offices of a humanitarian organization. Attacks directed against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian workers and facilities, are clearly prohibited under international humanitarian law and must stop immediately.

Humanitarian workers are providing assistance to those in need across Myanmar. So far this year they have reached more than 1.67 million people with food, cash and nutrition assistance. They stand ready to do more but remain constrained by lack of humanitarian access and funds. Access to many people in desperate need across the country remains extremely limited due to bureaucratic impediments put in place by the armed forces. I call on the Myanmar armed forces — and all parties — to facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

I also call on the international community to fund the response. Less than half of the US\$385 million required under the Humanitarian Response Plan and Interim Emergency Response Plan launched after the armed forces' takeover has been received. The people of Myanmar need our help to ensure that their basic rights are upheld and they can live with dignity.

The world is watching. I urge all parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians, ensure civilians can freely move towards safety when needed, and allow humanitarian assistance to be provided to those in need, including those being forced to flee the violence.

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