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AUSTRALIA

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## **Media release: Fire in Cox's Bazar leaves 11 Rohingya refugees dead and more than 500 injured**

24 March 2021

At least eleven people were killed and more than 500 injured in the massive fires which swept through Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh on March 22. A further 400 people are still unaccounted for.

The scale and intensity of the fire was unprecedented in the camps, and destroyed or damaged at least 60 per cent of the affected camps, leaving approximately 45,000 people homeless. Assessment of the full extent of the damage continues.

The fire also caused extensive damage to key essential facilities, including hospitals, health centres, learning centres and women-friendly spaces.

Caritas Australia and the international humanitarian community is deeply concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees who have been left destitute or homeless after the fire.

Cox's Bazar is home to nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees, who live in cramped informal housing with limited access to clean water, health care and income opportunities after fleeing the conflict in Rakhine state in Myanmar in 2017.

Caritas Bangladesh is working with other aid organisations and emergency services to assess damage and provide immediate support, including distributing emergency shelter kits.

As the response continues, Caritas Bangladesh will focus on providing non-food items and shelter support to those affected by the fire.

One of the key concerns is the loss of personal documentation in the fires, as well as the vulnerability of the Rohingya to potential theft, harassment and exploitation.

"This fire has had a huge impact on a group of people who have already experienced conflict and displacement, as well as several years of living in cramped conditions in the camps," said Bernice Sarpong, Caritas Australia's Humanitarian Program Coordinator for Asia.

"A large number of shelters and key infrastructure need to be rebuilt, and in the meantime, this means that more people will go without a safe place to live or important services."

"It's vital that we work together not just with other aid organisations, but also the Rohingya community to rebuild and recover as quickly as possible. Some members of the Rohingya community have already been key to the relief effort, including helping people to safety, supporting the fire response and supporting aid organisations on the ground."

Caritas Australia is supporting church and NGO partners on the ground. Caritas Australia is accepting donations to help support vulnerable communities in Asia

**The Catholic agency for international aid and development**

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through the Asia Emergency Appeal.

Visit [caritas.org.au](http://caritas.org.au) or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support.

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**Note:**

**Bernice Sarpong, Caritas Australia's Humanitarian Program Coordinator for Asia is available for interview.**

**Marcel Ratan Guda, Project Director at Caritas Bangladesh is available for interview from Bangladesh.**

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