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RESCUED ROHINGYA REFUGEES REQUIRE IMMEDIATE CARE AND PROTECTION

Bangladesh

Responding to the rescue of nearly 400 Rohingya refugees from the Bay of Bengal after a two month-long failed attempt to reach Malaysia, Amnesty International's South Asia Director, Biraj Patnaik, said:

"It is a relief to see that these nearly 400 Rohingya refugees have been welcomed by Bangladesh. Given the ordeal they have passed through, adrift on the sea for two months, they need to be provided with immediate medical attention and adequate food and shelter. Having first fled crimes against humanity in Myanmar and then being turned away by Malaysia, they have nowhere left to go – a fact that is harrowingly demonstrated by the callous indifference of other governments that refuse to give them sanctuary and the reported deaths at sea of 32 of their fellow passengers.

"At a time when there are fears that COVID-19 could strike the densely populated and poorly resourced Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, there's also a need for the authorities to ensure that the rescued refugees are protected from the spread of the virus and will receive medical attention if they need it. Rohingya refugees have suffered far too much already. The last thing they need is for the virus to sweep through the flimsy and tightly squeezed camps with inadequate health facilities to support them."

Background

The Bangladesh Coast Guard reportedly rescued 396 Rohingya refugees from a large boat, who began their journeys from both Bangladesh and Myanmar. The boat was turned back by the Malaysian authorities, who have enforced a strict coastal patrol to prevent anyone from entering the country during the pandemic.

The 396 people who were rescued reportedly include 182 women, 150 men and 64 children. The UN refugee agency says that they are severely malnourished and dehydrated. There were 32 refugees who reportedly died at sea.