

Saudis call on Myanmar to allow Rohingyas to return

Washington

A top Saudi relief official called yesterday for Myanmar to take back Rohingya refugees and let them live in peace.

Dr. Abdullah al-Rabeeah, former health minister and now leading the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, said major global powers need to press Myanmar to stop its violent expulsion of the Muslim ethnic minority into Bangladesh.

"What I want from our allies like the US and UK and the international community, I think it's time to put pressure on the Burma or Myanmar government to allow those refugees to go back and live in peace and get their rights," he said.

Rabeeah, on a stop in Washington before talks Friday at the United Nations on Yemen, said Saudi Arabia was already pumping aid in for the 422,000 Rohingyas



The bodies of Rohingya refugee are brought to shore on a boat by fellow Rohingyas after being recovered on the Naf river, as scores of refugees tried to flee from Myanmar to Bangladesh

who have been driven out of Myanmar's westernmost Rakhine state to Bangladesh since August 25.

The aid is going mostly into Bangladesh but also through Indonesia and Malaysia, he said.

"We are working heavily

to help the refugees in Bangladesh," he said.

Bangladesh said earlier Thursday that it had treated more than 2,350 Rohingya refugees injured as they fled Myanmar, including bullet and machete wounds and trauma from landmines.

Aid blocked as crisis deepens

Sittwe

An attack on an aid shipment in Myanmar's violence-wracked Rakhine state and a deadly Red Cross truck crash in Bangladesh on Thursday hampered desperately needed relief efforts for Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution.

An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ship carrying 50 tonnes of aid was halted by a 300-strong Buddhist mob in the state capital Sittwe on Wednesday night.

The group forced the ICRC to unload the aid from the boat and prevented the vessel from leaving, state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported Thursday, quoting Myanmar's Information Committee.

The crowd hurled "stones and Molotov (cocktails)" at riot police on the scene, injuring several officers before order was restored.

The ICRC confirmed the incident and said its staff were not injured, vowing to continue to try to deliver aid.

Saudi Arabia is airlifting 100 tonnes of donated tents, sleeping mats, blankets and food to refugees in Bangladesh, said the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is chartering the flight.

"Many of these families are still living in the open without adequate shelter, food or clean water," Mohammed Abdiker, IOM Director of Operations and Emergencies, said in a statement. (AFP)

Facebook bans militant group

Yangon

Facebook said it has banned a Rohingya militant group from its site, designating it a 'dangerous organisation' as information on the deepening crisis is muddled by claims, counter-claims and hate speech on social media.

The social network is a key tool in the information war taking place over violence in

Myanmar's Rakhine state, which has driven more than 420,000 Rohingya Muslims from the country and sparked UN accusations of military-led "ethnic cleansing".

Rohingya activists have used the platform to post alleged scenes of brutality from the conflict zone, where humanitarian and media access is severely restricted, while the army and

government deliver near-daily updates on the crisis.

A Facebook spokeswoman told AFP late Wednesday it was not requested by the government to bar the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which remains active on Twitter.

The spokeswoman added that the move was in line with its policy of prohibiting violent groups from its site.



Indonesians take part in a rally to condemn the killing of Rohingyas, in Jakarta

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