

## 'The water took them.' Myanmar residents describe horror of Cyclone Mocha



Coastal areas in Rakhine bore the brunt of Cyclone Mocha's winds, which tore over the state at over 200 kilometers per hour (195 mph) on Sunday, as one of the strongest storms to ever hit Myanmar. Video and witness accounts show widespread devastation, with entire villages wiped out, shelters destroyed and piles of debris stretching over miles. More than 400 people are estimated to have died, according to Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government, but the true toll and extent of the destruction is hard to know due to flooding, blocked roads and downed communications that have made access difficult. A massive clean-up operation is underway for the millions of people affected by the storm, but clean water supplies and fuel are running low, and there is a critical need for shelters, food, medicine and healthcare services, according to the UN's humanitarian office (OCHA). Aid agencies say they have finally begun reaching affected communities, a week after the cyclone hit and following claims Myanmar's military junta had been impeding access. Emergency food has been delivered to cyclone shelters and humanitarian workers are now trying to gauge the full impact of the cyclone in areas where they have access, it added. Crisis upon crisis

While western Rakhine state took a direct hit from the cyclone, the UN estimates 150,000 people in the country's northwest were also heavily affected. Houses, schools and hospitals were destroyed across Chin state, and about 85,000 people in Sagaing region were impacted – a situation exacerbated by ongoing conflict and the presence of troops hindering access to safe shelter, UN OCHA said. Since the Myanmar military seized power in a coup in 2021, the country has been rocked by violence and instability. Fighting between junta troops and resistance groups under the People's Defense Forces (PDF) unfolds almost daily across the country. One resident from Magway, where around 11,000 households were affected by the storm, said her husband died in flooding caused by Cyclone Mocha.

Concerns are high for thousands of vulnerable people because Rakhine is a largely impoverished and isolated state, which in recent years has been the site of widespread political violence. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced in the state due to the protracted conflict, many of them members of the stateless

Rohingya minority group, long persecuted in Myanmar. Rohingya in Rakhine are mostly confined to camps akin to open air prisons, where authorities place strict controls on their movement, as well as access to schooling and health care.



Of particular concern has been Pauktaw township, south of the capital Sittwe, where people were without assistance for four days, according to Brockmann. The area is “only accessible by boat” and is home to an estimated 26,500 internally displaced people who have been living in camps for 12 years. However, OCHA said in its update that on May 18 the World Food Programme had received permission to distribute emergency food in eight townships, including Pauktaw.

### ***Severity ranking of the concerns effect in the ASEAN region.***

<b><i>Section</i></b>	<b><i>Ranking</i></b>	<b><i>Issues identified</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendations</i></b>
Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar	R	The national serious disasters have require urgent assistance the affected area.	The ACMM monitors and tracks the situation, and stands ready to provide assistance when requested."

#### **Remarks:**

**R:** Severe Situation: Urgent intervention required.

**Y:** Situation of concern: Surveillance or assistance may or may not require, intensive monitoring



**G:** Relative normal situation or local Government can cope with the crisis, monitoring and no action required.

**N/A:** Lack of /unreliable data: Further assessment required.

### **ACMM Recommendations,**

The ACMM is deeply concerned about the ongoing disaster situation and the severe impact caused by Cyclone Mocha, which is the strongest storm ever recorded in Myanmar. On behalf of the ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine, we understand the difficulties that are being faced. If there is a need for additional assistance, we are pleased to provide full support in military medicine.

### **Reference**

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/20/asia/myanmar-cyclone-mocha-damage-interviews-intl-hnk/index.html>