

MYANMAR: 16 agencies express extreme concern after the death of an aid worker transporting COVID-19 test samples

YANGON, April 21 – With shock and sadness 16 humanitarian organizations received the news of a fatal shooting incident involving a vehicle of the World Health Organization (WHO) carrying COVID-19 test samples in Rakhine State. We express our sincere condolences to the family and UN colleagues of Mr Pyae Sone Win Maung, the WHO driver who did not survive the incident, and wish the injured official from the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) a swift recovery.

The incident in Minbya Township on April 20th demonstrates the urgent need for armed actors in Myanmar to lay down their weapons, heeding the call of the UN Secretary general for a [global ceasefire](#). The ongoing conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine and Chin States between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army is causing an increasing number of civilian casualties, while severely hampering access to healthcare as well as other efforts to reach communities with much needed assistance in the midst of a global pandemic. Across the globe and in Myanmar, millions of frontline health workers, humanitarian staff and other key workers are trying to contain the spread of the COVID 19 virus. We must support each and every one of these courageous people, and keep them safe from harm.

The incident in Rakhine State also raises grave concerns since it affects the capacity to detect cases of COVID 19, a vital component in the fight against the virus. As of April 21st, Myanmar has reported 119 confirmed cases of COVID 19 with 5 associated deaths. Like in many other countries, the actual number is likely to be higher. Rakhine State has some of the most severe rates of poverty and malnutrition among children in Myanmar, and is home to large numbers of vulnerable populations, including more than 200,000 displaced people in camps or other temporary shelters. Furthermore, access to health care and other life-saving services in the state is very limited. The combination of these factors makes the prevention of a widespread COVID 19 outbreak in Rakhine State all the more pressing.

We therefore call for the following:

- All armed actors in Myanmar to commit to an immediate ceasefire
- Widespread and unfettered access across Rakhine state and elsewhere in the country for all humanitarian workers, including from the UN, INGOs and Myanmar Civil Society Organizations, so that they can reach communities and support preparedness and response measures to counter the spread of COVID-19
- All actors to uphold the rights of conflict-affected populations to safety and protection.
- Improved and equal access to health care and other crucial services in Rakhine State and elsewhere in the country

Only by working together can we overcome the challenge of COVID 19. Humanitarians and #COVID19 frontline workers are #NotATarget.

ENDS

Signatories

Action Contre La Faim

CARE International

CDN-ZOA

Christian Aid

Danish Refugee Council

Humanity and Inclusion

International Rescue Committee

Lutheran World Federation

MA-UK

Mercy Corps

Norwegian Refugee Council

Oxfam

Save the Children

Solidarités International

Triangle Génération Humanitaire

World Vision International

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