Guterres for global solidarity to end Rohingya crisis

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres today urged international community to show that solidarity through action and concrete support for the Rohingya people and their Bangladeshi host communities.

“In this holy month of Ramadan, I appeal to the international community to show that solidarity through action and concrete support for the Rohingya people and their Bangladeshi host communities,” he said while speaking before an iftar party in Rohingya camp in Cox’s Bazar.

“I have come to Cox’s Bazar during this holy month of Ramadan on a mission of solidarity. Solidarity with Rohingya refugees. And solidarity with the Bangladeshi communities that so generously host them. I am here to shine a global spotlight on the plight – but also the potential. The more than one million Rohingya refugees here are proud. They are resilient. And they need the world’s support,” the UN chief said.

After decades of discrimination and persecution, he said, they had a massive outflow eight years ago, following the massacres that took place in Rakhine state.

Many others arrived more recently, escaping brutal violations of human rights, triggered generalized anti-Muslim hate, he said, adding this is especially significant as the world tomorrow officially marks International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

“Rohingya refugees have come here for what people anywhere seek: protection, dignity, safety for them and their families. I met and spoke with many today – and was inspired by their

courage and moved by their determination. Many shared harrowing accounts of their ordeals in Myanmar and their journeys here."

They want to go home – Myanmar is their homeland. And returning in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner is the primary solution to this crisis, he said.

"My message to all parties in Myanmar is clear: exercise maximum restraint, prioritize the protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law, and prevent further incitement of communal tension and violence – paving the way for democracy to take root," Guterres said.

But, he said, the situation in Myanmar remains dire, including in Rakhine state. Until the conflict and systematic persecution in Rakhine end, "we must support those who need protection."

"We are on the verge of a deep humanitarian crisis. With the announced cuts in financial assistance, we are facing the dramatic risk of having only 40 per cent in 2025 of the resources available for humanitarian aid in 2024," he said.

When Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived at the camp at 14 macrh 5:35pm, they were greeted by Rohingyas waving their hands. Both Prof Yunus and Guterres responded warmly.

Later, they joined 'Ramadan Solidarity Iftar' with one lakh Rohingyas.

Guterres said the international community has an obligation to invest now in that aid for people who have already suffered so much as there is no time to waste.

"Humanitarian assistance is making a difference – and we must recognise the enormous support of the Bangladeshi people sharing their land, forests, scarce water and meager

resources," he said, mentioning that he was last in Cox's Bazar in 2018 – and have seen many improvements in the camps.

"But the challenges are great on so many levels. These camps – and the communities that host them – are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Summers are scorching, and the chance of fires skyrocket."

In the cyclone and monsoon seasons – floods and dangerous landslides destroy homes and lives, the UN chief said.

UN agencies – as well as many humanitarian and development NGOs – are confronting the prospect of enormous funding cuts, he said.

This will have a direct and dire impact on people – on whether they have enough food to survive, on basic health care, on other essential services and protection, Guterres added.

He said: "The entire refugee population depends on humanitarian aid. I repeat: Cox's Bazar is ground zero for the impact of budget cuts on people in desperate need.

Here it is clear, budget reductions are not about numbers on a balance sheet, Guterres said, adding that funding cuts have dramatic human costs.

"Ultimately the solution must be found in Myanmar. We will not give up until conditions allow for the voluntary, safe and sustainable return for the refugees here.

"Until then, I urge the international community to step up. Solidarity with Rohingya refugees is needed more than ever – as is solidarity with Bangladesh," he said.