



30 April 2013 - The situation of 140,000 people displaced by recent violence in Rakhine state in Myanmar was at the top of the agenda in meetings between Barbara Manzi, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) in the country, and EU officials in Brussels.

"While a process is going on to help the country move ahead, we still have many humanitarian concerns," Ms. Manzi told reporters at a briefing in Brussels.

Currently the UN estimates that there are more than 140,000 people displaced throughout Rakhine following inter-communal violence that erupted there in June and October 2012. Another 85,000 have been displaced by armed conflict in Kachin State but there is some hope of a decrease in hostilities affecting Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon communities in South East Myanmar where there remain at least 400,000 internally displaced persons in rural areas.

"Each year there are also displacements due to natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods. This comes on top of poverty and lack of infrastructure and challenges that come with changes and democratization," Manzi said.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) has made available \$5 million in additional funding for the plight of the displaced in the state of Rakhine. The United Nations has had difficulties raising the necessary funds that are required for its humanitarian efforts in Myanmar. The monsoon season is set to start in Myanmar in May. Tens of thousands of displaced people are living on what are effectively paddy fields, which will be completely submerged once the rains hit in less than two months. "Let's be honest, if there will be a small localized natural disasters, such as floods, our resources are not there. We are overstretched."

Fears have been raised that the inter-communal violence between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims could undermine Myanmar's democratization, peace building and economic reforms.

When asked about the lifting of sanctions, Ms. Manzi said, that this was a question, which other UN colleagues were better placed to answer. "What is important for me is to ensure that there is an investment in the institutions because it is through the building of institutions that we can look into the needs of the people and address collectively their needs. We have a responsibility as the United Nations to ensure that institutions are put into place that can address these needs without delay. ...What is important is to act collectively to make an impact to see to that those needs are addressed whilst at the same time be patient because Myanmar has been a closed country for a long time and it requires support in building up structures to move ahead."