

UN calls for help as Myanmar earthquake death toll passes 3,300



United Nations, April 5 (RHC)-- The death toll from a major earthquake in Myanmar has risen above 3,300 as the United Nations aid chief made a renewed call for the world to help the disaster-struck nation.

The magnitude 7.7 quake that struck the Southeast Asian nation on March 28 resulted in 3,354 deaths and 4,508 people injured, with 220 others missing, according to new figures published by state media on Saturday.

The United Nations' top aid official met with victims in the central Myanmar city of Mandalay, situated close to the epicentre and now grappling with severe damage across the city, and described the destruction as "staggering."

"The world must rally behind the people of Myanmar," Tom Fletcher wrote in a post on X. He praised humanitarian and community groups who led the response to the quake with "courage, skill and determination." "Many themselves lost everything, and yet kept heading out to support survivors," Fletcher said.

The new toll was announced after the country's military government chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing returned from a rare foreign trip to a regional summit in Bangkok on Friday, where he met with leaders including the prime ministers of Thailand and India.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a post-quake ceasefire in Myanmar's civil war to be made permanent, and said the elections needed to be "inclusive and credible", an Indian foreign ministry spokesperson said on Friday.

China, Russia and India were among the first countries to provide support, sending rescue teams to Myanmar to help locate survivors. The United States has traditionally been at the forefront of international disaster relief, but President Donald Trump has dismantled the country's humanitarian aid agency.

Washington said on Friday it was adding \$7 million on top of an earlier \$2 million in assistance to Myanmar, but added it was unfair to expect the nation to keep leading humanitarian relief around the world.

[SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS and AFP]

Since overthrowing the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, the military has struggled to run Myanmar, leaving the economy and basic services, including healthcare, in tatters, a situation exacerbated by the March 28th earthquake.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Friday the military government was restricting aid supplies to quake-hit areas where communities did not back its rule.

The UN office said it was investigating 53 reported attacks by the military against opponents, including air strikes, of which 16 happened after the ceasefire was declared on Wednesday.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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