

Myanmar accused of laying mines after refugee injuries

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh (AP) — Myanmar's military has been accused of planting landmines in the path of Rohingya Muslims fleeing violence in its western Rakhine state, with Amnesty International reporting that several people have been wounded.

Refugee accounts of the latest spasm of violence in Rakhine have typically described shootings by soldiers and arson attacks on villages. But there are at least several cases that point to anti-personnel landmines or other explosives as the cause of injuries on the border with Bangladesh, where 400,000 Rohingya have fled in the past three weeks.

AP reporters on the Bangladesh side of the border saw an elderly woman with devastating leg wounds: one leg with the calf apparently blown off and the other also badly injured. Relatives said she had stepped on a landmine.

Myanmar has one of the few militaries, along with North Korea and Syria, which has openly used anti-personnel landmines in recent years, according to Amnesty. An international treaty in 1997 outlawed the use of the weapons.

Lt. Col S.M. Ariful Islam, commanding officer of the Bangladesh border guard in Teknaf, said he was aware of at least three Rohingya injured in recent explosions.

Bangladeshi officials and Amnesty researchers believe new explosives have been recently planted, including one that



EXPLOSIVE EVIDENCE. A Rohingya child is carried in a sling while his family walks through rice fields after crossing the border into Bangladesh. Myanmar's military has been accused of planting landmines in the path of Rohingya Muslims fleeing violence in its western Rakhine state. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangué)

persecution."

The violence and exodus began on August 25 when Rohingya insurgents attacked Myanmar police and paramilitary posts in what they said was an effort to protect their ethnic minority from persecution by security forces in the majority Buddhist country.

In response, the military unleashed what it called a "clearance operations" to root out the insurgents. Accounts from refugees show the Myanmar military is also targeting civilians with shootings and wholesale burning of Rohingya villages in an apparent attempt to purge Rakhine state of Muslims.

Bloody anti-Muslim rioting that erupted in 2012 in Rakhine state forced more than 100,000 Rohingya into displacement camps in Bangladesh, where many still live today.

Rohingya have faced decades of discrimination and persecution in Myanmar and are denied citizenship despite centuries-old roots in the Rakhine region. Myanmar denies Rohingya exist as an ethnic group and says those living in Rakhine are illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

the rights group said blew off a Bangladeshi farmer's leg and another that wounded a Rohingya man. Both incidents occurred the same day.

"It may not be landmines, but I know there have been isolated cases of Myanmar soldiers planting explosives three to four days ago," Ariful said.

Myanmar presidential spokesman Zaw Htay did not answer phone calls seeking comment. Military spokesman Myat Min Oo said he couldn't comment without talking to his superiors. A major at the Border Guard Police headquarters in northern Maungdaw near the Bangladesh

border also refused to comment.

Amnesty said that based on interviews with eyewitnesses and analysis by its own weapons experts, it believes there is "targeted use of landmines" along a narrow stretch of the northwestern border of Rakhine state that is a crossing point for fleeing Rohingya.

"All indications point to the Myanmar security forces deliberately targeting locations that Rohingya refugees use as crossing points," Amnesty official Tirana Hassan said in a statement. "This is a cruel and callous way of adding to the misery of people fleeing a systematic campaign of

Ai Weiwei puts human face on migrant crisis in *Human Flow*

By Jill Lawless
The Associated Press

VENICE, Italy — The United Nations says there are 65 million forcibly displaced people around the world — a number so huge it can be overwhelming to contemplate.

Artist Ai Weiwei wants to make viewers see both the scale of the crisis and the humanity of the migrants with his documentary *Human Flow*, premiering at the Venice Film Festival.

The film, one of 21 competing for the festival's Golden Lion prize, draws on a deep empathy with his subjects — one the artist came to through direct experience.

"It's in my blood," said Ai, who spent his childhood in a remote Chinese community after his poet father was exiled by the country's Communist authorities.

"I was born when my father was a

refugee," the artist said. "I understood how low humanity can go from (when I was) very, very young, and how wrong things can go."

"I feel I am part of it," he said of the migrant crisis. "I know them so well. They are part of me."

Many other people feel detached and powerless when faced with images of migrants making perilous journeys by land and sea. Ai says that is due in part to news reports, which inform people but can also dull the senses.

"Because you feel, 'This is senseless,'" Ai told The Associated Press in Venice. "Then you shut off because the crisis is getting too big, you cannot do anything about it."

"That is the most dangerous moment."

The 60-year-old Ai is one of the world's most successful artists, famous around the world for his installations of bicycles and

sunflower seeds. In his native China, he was alternately encouraged, tolerated, and harassed, spending time in detention and being barred for years from leaving the country.

Now based in Berlin, Ai frequently draws on images of flight and exile for his work. And he often thinks big: Last year, he wrapped the columns of the German capital's Konzerthaus in thousands of orange life jackets left behind by migrants on the Greek island of Lesbos.

Human Flow is on an even larger scale.

Ai's team of around 200 crew members travelled to 23 countries and territories, visiting Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, Rohingya from Myanmar in Bangladesh, Afghan refugees returning home from exile in Pakistan, and Mexicans on the border with the U.S.

The film also follows the route taken by

more than 1 million people since 2015, across the Aegean Sea to Greece and then by land through Europe. Some in the film are halted by police and barbed wire at borders, while others make it to a reception center in Germany, or head for the English Channel in hopes of getting to Britain.

Ai wanders through the film as a compassionate observer, taking pictures on his phone, talking to people, and even cutting one man's hair. Interspersed with those scenes are aerial shots that turn teeming crowds into almost abstract tableaux.

"With this kind of tragedy, you are trying to find a language to deal with this large topic," Ai said.

"Sometimes my iPhone has to touch the (person's) face or drop in the water."

Continued on page 7

New rules, tech are dimming Hong Kong's signature neon glow

Continued from page one

Kong's neon industry has been gradually dying out, a victim of changing tastes, new technologies, and tighter regulations. Some groups have been fighting to save the signs as part of the city's cultural heritage before they disappear completely.

"Neon signs are not just something that illuminate," said Cardin Chan of Hong Kong Neon Heritage, whose members are cataloguing the signs still left and working to come up with creative ways to preserve them. "They should be considered as art. And it is very unique to Hong Kong."

Wu Chi-kai is one of about half a dozen neon-sign masters left in Hong Kong. The 50-year-old said he now earns about a third of what he made during the "golden era for the neon sign industry" in the 1980s and early '90s.

At the time, Hong Kong was at its economic peak. Wu had done a six-month apprenticeship in his teens before being hired by a sign maker. Their days were so busy, he said, that he sometimes slept in the studio.

"Around 1997, LEDs came out," said Wu. "I thought that it would be a strong enemy of neon signs. As neon signs had been used for decades, people perceived it as old-fashioned. And people usually love to use something new for their store signs."

Light-emitting diode signs have since proliferated across Hong Kong's cityscape because they're brighter and more energy efficient, but purists say they also lack neon's warm tones. Neon's appeal also faded because of its association with red-light districts, a turnoff for businesses wanting a wholesome image.

Government regulations have also sped neon's demise. Decades ago, few regulations governed sign placement and size, said Wu. Businesses tried to outdo each other by putting up bigger and bigger signs, held up by cables and jutting out

over busy thoroughfares like the Nathan Road tourist strip in Kowloon's Tsim Sha Tsui district. At night, they appear to float in the sky.

"When our clients wanted their neon signs to catch the attention of passersby, they would make the signs wider to avoid being blocked by the other ones," he said.

Hong Kong's Buildings Department has been cracking down and ordering that some be removed. It doesn't tally how many neon signs Hong Kong has, but it says the city has about 120,000 signboards, many of which are believed to be unauthorized. In each of the past two years, the department has removed or repaired about 2,700 dangerous or unauthorized signboards and issued removal orders for about 700 more.

Among those caught up in the clampdown was a sign depicting a giant Angus cow that had long been a local landmark, hanging above the entrance to a restaurant called Sammy's Kitchen since 1977.

The owners donated it to M+, Hong Kong's museum of visual culture, which is now adding neon signs to its permanent collection and had dedicated an exhibition in 2014 to neon signs.

AP assistants Daniel Ma and Emily Cheung contributed to this report.

I DON'T LET GAMBLING LIMIT ME

I want the time and money for what's really important

OPGR Multnomah County Health Department



I set limits and stick to them.

Help is **FREE** and **confidential** at
1-877-MY-LIMIT (877-695-4648) or **OPGR.org**