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World pressure intensified Wednesday on Myanmar's military leaders to allow massive aid into their ravaged country.

The top United States diplomat in Myanmar said that the country's authorities were now estimating that the weekend cyclone might have killed 70,000, and she warned that the toll could rise to 100,000 if aid was not prompt. () The Myanmar government has so far put its official tally of the deaths from the cyclone at 22,500, of which perhaps 40 percent were children. A further 41,000 people are missing, and up to 1 million people are estimated to have been left homeless.

() Earlier in the day, the French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, said that the United Nations should invoke its "**responsibility to protect**" civilians as the basis for a resolution to allow the delivery of international aid even without the permission of the military junta.

() "We are seeing at the United Nations if we can't implement the **responsibility to protect**, given that food, boats and relief teams are there, and obtain a United Nations' resolution which authorizes the delivery and imposes this on the Burmese government," Kouchner, who founded the aid group Doctors Without Borders, told reporters in Paris.

But the United Nations' under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs, John Holmes, resisted the idea of taking action to force Myanmar to open its doors, though he noted that 50 to 10 United Nations aid workers were awaiting word on their applications for visas.

"To be honest I'm not sure we're at that stage at the moment," Holmes said at a noon briefing on Wednesday. "We are having useful and constructive discussions with the authorities of Myanmar. It is moving in the right direction. We want it to move much faster, clearly. But I'm not sure it would help at this moment at least to embark on what could be seen by some people as a confrontational path."

When a reporter from Al Jazeera asked why the United Nations should not simply going into Myanmar, "invited or not," Holmes replied tartly, "I'm not sure that invading Myanmar would be a very sensible option at this particular moment." He added: "Would it actually get aid to the people who are really suffering on the ground any quicker? Personally I doubt it."

In 2005, the United Nations recognized the concept of "**responsibility to protect**" civilians when their governments could or would not do it, even if this meant intervention that violated national sovereignty. But it has been rarely applied. ()

For full article, please go to:

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/07/asia/08myanmar.php?page=1>

Cyclone Nargis Situation Report issued on 12 May 2008 by the UN Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs is available at:

http://yangon.unic.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=167&Itemid=73

For more detailed account of the crisis situation in Burma and the discussions around its application to R2P, please refer to:

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/world/story.html?id=bcda6dd5-97bd-4c99-ae73-590dedd3487b&k=35439>