

Islamic Relief UK launches Afghanistan emergency appeal as it warns of country on the brink of famine



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The charity is one of the few agencies now delivering emergency aid on the ground as extreme hunger and winter threatens the lives of millions

As a harsh winter set in for 23 million people facing acute hunger, Islamic Relief UK has launched an emergency appeal for Afghanistan as one of the few aid agencies delivering emergency aid in the country.

The charity is warning that the country is just one step away from famine as many families are running out of food and half of all children under five are expected to suffer from malnutrition this year.

Food insecurity is now at alarming levels in Afghanistan; many people are desperately seeking any available support. Projections suggest that the situation could severely affect 97% of the population unless the situation improves.

Food is particularly scarce in rural areas, with reports of increasing malnutrition and deaths amongst the most vulnerable. Women and children are especially at risk, with women typically prioritising their families' needs above their own.

Poorer families are exhausting the last of any meagre savings to buy food, and people are begging on the streets to meet their basic needs, and increasing numbers of families are being pushed deep into debt.

Child labour has also increased as parents are forced to send their children to work. They polish shoes, collect garbage or beg in the streets. Young children work for more than 12-hour shifts for \$1 or \$2 a day to buy a meal for families.

The situation is getting more desperate by the day and as the country's economy collapses people are being plunged deeper into poverty. Due to international restrictions on the central and commercial banks, Afghanistan is facing a cash and liquidity crisis, meaning even are unable to get their salaries to feed themselves. Banking and financial restrictions are also impacting humanitarian agencies and their ability to deliver vital aid and avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, it is vital takes a more nuanced approach to its sanctions policies to ensure that the Afghan economy can function, and that the humanitarian response is not inadvertently impeded.

Islamic Relief is also calling on governments who have committed to humanitarian support to ensure that fast-track flexible funding is made available to allow humanitarian agencies working on the ground to meet urgent needs.

Islamic Relief will be distributing over 11,000 monthly food packages made up of flour, rice, pulses, oil, salt and sugar to the most vulnerable families in Kabul, Nangarhar, Balkh, Bamiyan, and Kapisa provinces and will also be supporting people with blankets and winter clothes.

As the economic situation and restriction of funds decimate the health care system, Covid-19 is also of particular concern, especially with critical shortages of medicines, essential supplies and medical facilities. Up to 3000 health centres have reduced or stopped services in the country.

Several aid organisations are working on the ground, but the needs are enormous. There isn't enough aid available for 23 million people. Hunger has forced millions of people to move to different regions and many are in camps where life is miserable. Poverty inside the camps and the lack of hygiene has caused significant health problems. There has been a cholera outbreak in a few campsites, and the situation is likely to worsen if not tackled soon. "People are telling me the same

thing; they are terrified and worried about their children. It is a life-or-death situation now as the country is one step away from famine.

The situation in Afghanistan is heart-breaking, desperate families are starving and facing a terrible winter. That half of all children under five are expected to suffer from malnutrition this year is difficult to comprehend and truly awful to imagine. We are running out of time, and we fear a humanitarian calamity taking place unless more support is given.

Thankfully, Islamic Relief is one of the few that has the means to now be delivering emergency aid and food in the country, but support is urgently needed as the humanitarian needs spiral out of control. I pray that donors and the international community can help to improve a worsening situation.

For more information or to arrange an interview with someone in Afghanistan, please contact Jonaid Jilani, Media 07872 403534.

People can donate to the appeal by going to:

Donate to Afghanistan – Emergency Appeal | Islamic Relief UK
Relief is a faith-inspired, development and humanitarian agency working to transform and save the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in over 40 countries. Islamic Relief assists people according to need and does not discriminate in any way.

Set up in Birmingham in 1984 by a group of volunteers, we have assisted over 117 million people all over the world. We're saving lives and empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty in over 40 countries – from Bangladesh to Bosnia, Pakistan to Palestine, Kenya to Kosovo. Islamic Relief is on the ground in some of the world's most dangerous and difficult places – including Syria and Yemen – strengthening the most marginalised communities to withstand conflict and natural disasters and to build a brighter future. We also support vulnerable people in the UK in partnership with local charities and organisations.

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