

UN warns of imminent humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan

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An Afghan family take a meal at their temporary home in a camp for internally displaced people in Kabul, Afghanistan. (File photo by AP)

United Nations, August 25 (RHC)-- The United Nations has warned of a looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as supplies of food aid deplete in the war-torn country.

The UN's World Food Program (WFP) announced on Tuesday that since the Taliban retook power in Afghanistan 10 days ago, it had dispatched 600 metric tons of food and 16 new trucks into the country to expand preparations and help families survive the upcoming harsh winter. However, the WFP's Deputy Regional Director Anthea Webb told reporters in Geneva that the agency was running out of time to get aid to where it was needed.

The WFP says it dispatches food stocks to Afghanistan and distributes it to needy families every winter before they are cut off by heavy snow. This year, the agency said, with a number of constraints such as financial issues, supplies of wheat flour — as its core supply — could start to deplete from October.

"We have only a few short weeks to secure the necessary donor funding and get food in place before mountain passes are blocked by snow," Webb said, warning that once the snow set in, it would be too late to help. Webb warned that any further delay in WFP preparations could be fatal, saying the agency needed 200 million dollars immediately to provide vital assistance "before it is too late."

"A humanitarian catastrophe awaits the people of Afghanistan this winter unless the global community makes their lives a priority," she added.

Webb emphasized that the Taliban's presence wouldn't impede the UN aid activities, as it had been in Afghanistan since 1963, including during the previous Taliban rule in the 1990s.

The WFP has previously warned that one-third of Afghanistan's 38 million people were already at risk of acute hunger. Furthermore, the country is facing its second severe drought in three years and the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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