

Afghans face “avalanche of hunger and destitution” - UN agency

GENEVA, Dec 14 (Reuters) - Almost all Afghans do not have enough to eat and a failing economy could tip Afghanistan’s increasingly dire situation under Taliban rule into catastrophe next year, the U.N.’s World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday.

WFP surveys showed an estimated 98% of Afghans are not eating enough, with seven in 10 families resorting to borrowing food, which pushes them deeper into poverty, a spokesperson for the agency told reporters.

The abrupt withdrawal of foreign aid following the Taliban victory in August has left Afghanistan’s fragile economy on the brink of collapse, with prices for food, fuel and other basic staples rising rapidly out of reach for many.

“The spiralling economic crisis, the conflict and drought has meant the average family can now barely cope,” Tomson Phiri told a Geneva briefing. “We have a huge amount to do to stop this crisis from becoming a catastrophe.”

The WFP has provided food assistance to 15 million Afghans so far in 2021, and to seven million in November alone. Next year, it plans to ramp up its assistance to 23 million people across all provinces in Afghanistan.

“We cannot waste any moment,” Phiri said. “Our country director describes the situation as quite dire. She says it’s ‘an avalanche of hunger and destitution’.”

Separately, Nada Al-Nashif, U.N. Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, said Afghan families face “severe poverty and hunger” with many pushed into desperate measures, including child labour, early marriage and “even the sale of children”.

Source:

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