

NGOS EXPRESS GRAVE CONCERN OVER SUSPENSION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE IN YEMEN

Humanitarian organizations warn of looming food crisis if immediate resolution to negotiations is not reached

Sana'a, 07 December 2023 – Twenty-two humanitarian organizations in Yemen today are voicing our deep concern regarding the World Food Programme's (WFP) recent announcement of a “pause” of the General Food Assistance (GFA) programme, which will impact 9.5 million people experiencing food insecurity across northern Yemen.

The suspension of food assistance reportedly comes after unsuccessful negotiations between Ansar Allah (AA) and WFP to reach an agreement on reductions to food assistance, which have been ongoing for nearly one year. Global humanitarian funding cuts have resulted in the need to retarget to reach the most vulnerable. Due to the disruption of food supply chains caused by this pause, it will take at least four months for the resumption of food assistance even if an agreement is reached.

The decision to pause food assistance will exacerbate the already critical humanitarian situation, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable populations, including children, pregnant women, and the elderly, leading to malnutrition, worsening health conditions, increased economic strain, and potentially fueling social unrest and conflict.

According to the WFP, there are currently 17 million people - more than half of the population of Yemen - at crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 and 4), including 2.2 million malnourished children and 1.3 million pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Food assistance has been critical to averting disaster in Yemen, where an estimated 6.1 million people are just one step away from famine.

Even before the suspension was announced, gaps in the food assistance programme have limited the ability to fully meet the needs of vulnerable communities. In October, Mohammad, an elderly man with 10 family members and no income, told us about the impact of food scarcity. Mohammad's family is among the 4.5 million internally displaced Yemenis and it had been three months since they last received food assistance. As a result, he was forced to sell some of the little furniture he had remaining in his home in order to secure food for himself and his family.

In one district in Amran Governorate alone, 12,270 families (85,890 persons) received only two food baskets so far this year, down from the expected six they would have received as a minimum based on their needs. Skipping meals is becoming a common reality for families and the risk of resorting to irreversible negative coping mechanisms, such as pulling children out of school for child labour and early marriage, both of which are rising rapidly.

"After years of conflict and economic decline, food aid is a lifeline for millions of Yemenis and suspending it as the country works towards peace is a catastrophic scenario. We understand the fears and concerns of the affected Yemeni people, and we stand in solidarity with them. Humanitarian responders are doing all they can to alleviate suffering

and continue our advocacy efforts for renewed food principled assistance," said the undersigned NGOs.

In order to prevent a disastrous food crisis in Yemen, we urgently call on:

- WFP and AA to **reach an agreement allowing the resumption of principled food assistance** to the most vulnerable communities in Yemen. The sooner an agreement is reached the more likelihood of averting the risk of famine conditions returning to Yemen.
- The international community and donors to **urgently mobilize additional resources to mitigate the impact of the suspension** particularly through scale up of nutrition as well as health and cash assistance.
- Donors to provide **funding for resilience building** and development programming to enable communities to recover from the impact of the war and economic decline, while also ensuring those in need of humanitarian assistance are not left behind.

Humanitarian organizations in Yemen operate independently of any political or governmental agendas. Our sole focus is on delivering humanitarian aid to those in need. We have played, and will continue to play a critical role in addressing the ongoing crisis, always prioritizing the needs of the communities we serve.

While these developments are deeply troubling, we recognize the challenges ahead and reaffirm our commitment to do everything within our capacity to mitigate these impacts and urge parties to reach a resolution so that much-needed food assistance can resume and we can work to meet the needs of Yemeni communities.

Signed by the following NGOs in Yemen:

Accept International Yemen

Acted

ADRA

CARE

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

Dorcas

Humanity & Inclusion - Handicap

International

International Medical Corps (IMC)

International Rescue Committee

INTERSOS

Islamic Relief

Mariestopes International Yemen (MSIY)

Médecins due Monde (Mdm)

Muslim Hands

Norwegian Refugee Council

OXFAM

Qatar Charity

Relief International

Save the Children

Vision Hope International

ZOA

ENDS

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