



Urgent Appeal

Effects of COVID-19 on the humanitarian situation of the Sahrawi refugees

The Sahrawi authorities started early with the implementation of a comprehensive plan for the prevention of the Coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19, based on closing the borders with neighboring countries, stopping movement between the wilayas and between these and the Liberated Territories of the Sahrawi Republic, staying at home, banning congregations and meetings, closing schools and having the minimum number of employees and workers necessary to guarantee the functioning of daily life services; also, the implementation of hygiene and sterilization campaigns by the relevant institutions and the intensification of awareness efforts to comply with quarantine procedures, social distance and hygiene care. The implementation of this plan is monitored by a High Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, and it also includes several institutions, among which are the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Water and Environment, the Ministry of Cooperation, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Trade and the Sahrawi Red Crescent. This plan and its compliance by the citizens have had great credit in not registering any cases of infection by this dangerous pandemic so far, and this is considered a great achievement that we must preserve; but, as expected, the small commercial and economic activities that are a fundamental pillar in supporting with the provision of some of the daily needs for thousands of families in the Sahrawi refugee camps and the Liberated Territories have been paralyzed.

The situation will become more difficult for the most vulnerable refugees, estimated at 88% of the 173,600 refugees, as most of food stuffs in the emergency stock are running out due to the lack of funding.

As a result of the above, The international humanitarian organizations operating in the Sahrawi refugee camps, especially UNHCR, World Food Programme, UNICEF and five international NGOs (Oxfam, CISP, Médicos del Mundo Spain, Movimiento por la Paz y Solidaridad Internacional), issued a joint appeal on 19 of April 2020 to request contributions and donations from donors to support the procedures to prevent COVID-19, and to avoid further deterioration of the humanitarian situation, especially as the rate of anemia among women, pregnant and lactating women has increased to over 73%, and regarding the percentage of malnutrition among children under the age of five is close to 25%; there is also a high percentage of people with diabetes and blood pressure. The value of urgent needs in the basic sectors (water and hygiene, health, nutrition, education and protection) for Sahrawi refugees in Algeria is estimated at approximately 14 million Euros. As for the residents of the Liberated Territories of the

Sahrawi Republic, whose population exceeds sixty thousand, the impact of COVID-19 crisis is clearly visible in their already difficult situation, as well as the negative implications resulting from the drought situation that has affected their area of residence for two years, especially because to cover their needs they depend on livestock breeding and trade with the border areas of neighboring countries that have been closed to prevent the transmission of the pandemic. The urgent needs of this

population to prevent COVID-19 are estimated at 5 million Euros, of which 18% is for water, 37% for health sector and 45% for nutrition.

In order to contain the negative effects of COVID-19, the Sahrawi Red Crescent appeals to donor countries to accelerate the provision of urgent contributions to the Sahrawi refugees and to support the efforts of the UN agencies and international NGOs operating in the Sahrawi refugee camps, in addition to giving priority to life-saving sectors, especially health, wash, food security and other high priority sectors, such as people with special needs, distance learning and support for Peace Holidays Program for the children living in the camps.

The Sahrawi Red Crescent expresses its gratitude to Algeria, the host country, for its generous and long-term support for the Sahrawi refugees, and appreciates the measures taken by the Algerian Government to facilitate and accelerate the transit of international humanitarian aid to these refugees. It also thanks the solidarity movement and the donor countries for their support and commitment to the refugees, and commends the valuable efforts made by the UN agencies, especially UNHCR, World Food Program, UNICEF and the international NGOs operating in the camps, to alleviate the suffering of the Sahrawi refugees. It would also like to take this timely opportunity to confirm its support for the appeal that was issued by them on the 19th of April to support the preventive measures against COVID-19 pandemic.



28th April, 2020