



### [The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Its International Partners Agree to Set Up a Humanitarian Trust Fund to Help Address the Ongoing Crisis in Afghanistan](#)

Concerning levels of food insecurity affecting more than 20 million people in Afghanistan, approximately half of the country's total population, have propelled member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and their global partners to initiate a substantial humanitarian aid effort. There have been no denials from countries or relief organizations regarding the severity of the humanitarian crisis there, but recent action has been absent partly because of a distrust for the Taliban, which resealed control of the nation back in August. The OIC has announced that it will establish a trust fund, operating under the authority of the Islamic Development Bank, in order to help alleviate the catastrophe and prevent a total economic collapse in the country. Civilian casualties there were at a record level this year with many negatively impacted and being subjected to violence and forced labor. An estimated nearly 700,000 Afghans have been displaced from their homes in 2021 alone, adding to the already 3 million internally displaced prior to the start of this year. The OIC humanitarian trust fund will include a food security program, as well as a special envoy for Afghanistan.

The size of the trust fund or how contributions will be shared among member states has not been announced. The U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs has said that an appeal for \$4.5 billion has been made but that this amount would only be sufficient as a stop-gap measure and that the scale of the humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan will require much more. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has placed Afghanistan at the top of its emergency list, ahead of other major crises in Ethiopia and Yemen. The country is approaching near universal poverty, with 97% of Afghans living under dire circumstances. These citizens are without access to basic supplies needed to survive winter such as food, medicine, clean water, and electricity, and 70% of teachers are not being paid. The United Nations has estimated that a staggering 1 million children are facing death from severe acute malnutrition.

The Afghan government and the country's economy has relied almost entirely on foreign aid for its survival the past 20 years. Sanctions and suspension of international assistance have made the administration of the state and economy a near impossibility. \$9.4 billion belonging to the Afghan Central Bank reserves and to the deposed U.S.-allied Afghan government was held in the United States. This money has been frozen by the Treasury Department and withheld from the Taliban government. As a result, 46 U.S. lawmakers have sent a letter to President Biden pressuring him to ease access to this money in order to alleviate the desperate threat confronting innocent civilians and to avoid a new refugee crisis in the region. Other U.S. lawmakers have said that the Taliban, who has retained its connections to al-Qaeda, must not have access to any funding. Very few countries have recognized the legitimacy of the Taliban government and are worried about its willingness to respect human rights and not oppress the civilian population.

The United States has so far promised \$300 million worth of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and agreed to transfer \$280 million from the World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. However, the U.N. has expressed that the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe will require much more. China and Russia have recently vetoed a U.N. resolution which would have allowed the committee responsible for Afghanistan to determine – on its own – humanitarian exemptions to sanctions in order to facilitate assistance to the country.