
Middle East: Commission allocates €34 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable Palestinian populations in the West Bank and Gaza and in Lebanon

IP/06/959

Brussels, 7 June 2006

As announced by Commissioner Louis Michel, the European Commission today allocated €34 million in humanitarian aid for vulnerable Palestinian populations in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon. This will enable an urgent and forceful response to the worsening humanitarian situation, including the delivery of food, emergency employment, health and psycho-social support, water and sanitation services, shelter rehabilitation, protection and coordination. These activities will be implemented by UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross. Funds are channelled through the Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO).

Louis Michel said: "I am deeply concerned about the sharp deterioration of the humanitarian situation and increased hardship among the population in the West Bank and Gaza. The rising internal insecurity resulting from the worsening humanitarian situation, and Israeli movement restrictions, make access for humanitarian operations more difficult. In spite of these difficult circumstances, ECHO's partners continue to provide humanitarian assistance on the basis of the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. They are however in no position – in terms of mandate or capacity – to take over service delivery from the PA institutions".

Some 70% of the population of the occupied Palestinian Territories currently lives below the poverty line of \$2,7 per day, unemployment stands at 40% and today 51% of the population is food insecure.

Under this new Decision, activities in West Bank, Gaza (WBG) and Lebanon will include:

Food

In the WBG, food distributions through the UNWRA and WFP for approximately 84,000 refugee families and for approximately 80,000 non-refugee food insecure families through food-for-work and food-for-training schemes will be funded. Approximately 7,100 vulnerable families will have increased their food security through the provision of productive agricultural inputs.

Emergency employment

In the WBG, UNWRA will create meaningful job opportunities for approximately 5,000 non-refugee families living on less than \$1.6 per day. A further 3,400 families of registered refugees in the West Bank will be offered job opportunities to prevent them falling into deeper poverty.

Health and psycho-social support

To enhance access to and quality of essential health care services, support will be provided to serve a population of approximately 800,000 people living in WBG. Where permanent primary health care facilities are not available, mobile clinics will provide basic health services serving 6,000 patients. Particular attention will be given to elderly special hardship cases. Psychological support for children will continue together with UNRWA schools and health centres. Projects will be carried out by NGO partners such as MPDL, HI, Caritas and UNWRA.

Water and Sanitation

Through NGO partners such as CARE, OXFAM and ACH, 163,258 people living in poor and vulnerable communities in the Northern West Bank and Southern Gaza Strip will benefit from improved sanitation conditions. Some 1,000 families living in the West Bank will have improved access to safe water by increasing their water storage capacity. In Lebanon, UNWRA will rehabilitate the so called "Gaza building" located in Beirut.

Shelter

In Lebanon, the second phase of shelter rehabilitation in Sikke camp will entail 113 shelters, accommodating 531 Palestinian refugees, including the provision of adequate sanitation facilities to ensure proper living conditions in accordance with UNRWA standards.

Household Income

In south Lebanon, some 100 vulnerable families living in refugee camps will be provided with professional tool kits and specific training. More than 120 individual beneficiaries from previous income generating operations in the area of Beirut and the Bekaa will benefit from follow-up activities. More than 1,166 dependants will also benefit from these activities. Activities will be implemented by the humanitarian partner PU.

Protection and assistance to non registered Palestinian refugees

In Lebanon, assistance will be provided to an estimated 3,000 non-registered Palestinians. This will include targeted non-food assistance, vocational training support and the provision of legal aid to approximately 120 cases.

Other activities to be carried out include protection which will continue to be supported through the ICRC and UN-OCHA will implement its humanitarian coordination mandate in the WBG.

Since the outbreak of the second *Intifada* in September 2000, this is the 22nd allocation of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian populations in WBG. Since 2000, the Commission's total humanitarian response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reached €191 million.

For further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/field/gaza/index_en.htm