**A difficult time for Afghanistan**

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Pakistan has been stressing for durable peace and security in war-torn Afghanistan all along, prior to and after the departure of US-led NATO forces from there, calling upon the international community at large to extend all possible help and assistance to the Afghan people to avert the great humanitarian crisis which is looming large as the winter season has already set there and the people do not have adequate warm clothes, quilts or blankets to protect themselves and their children from the cold weather.

In furtherance of its continued support to the Afghan people, Pakistan has already hosted the historic 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad in a successful, appreciated and result-oriented manner on December 19, 2021. The historical OIC moot deliberated on various issues and problems confronting the people of Afghanistan, vowed to play a leading role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and more importantly, unanimously agreed on establishing a Humanitarian Trust Fund, launch a Food Security Programme and engaged with the World Health Organisation for securing vaccines and medical supplies.

[Karachi police arrest three street criminals after alleged encounter](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/karachi-police-arrest-three-street-criminals-after-alleged-encounter)

Following this clarion call from the OIC member states and pleas being repeatedly made by Pakistan for helping the people of Afghanistan, releasing the frozen funds and extend all possible help to avert the humanitarian crisis, it is worth mentioning here that the UN General Assembly has appealed to the world at large for providing financial assistance to the people of Afghanistan to the extent of $5 billion and the US also announced providing about $300 million assistance for the needy Afghan people.

Pakistan has all along been supporting the people of Afghanistan and time and again reiterated that the Afghan people will continue to be supported and not abandoned in their time of need.

This reiteration of support to the people of Afghanistan was made yet again only the other day in the meeting of the Apex Committee on Afghanistan, presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad, which also renewed its appeal to the international community and relief agencies to provide aid at this critical juncture to avert an economic collapse and to save precious lives in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister, besides the reiteration of Pakistan’s support to the people of the neighbouring country, also welcomed the UN appeal to the international community for providing financial assistance to Afghanistan purely on humanitarian grounds.

[Karachi reports 41pc coronavirus positivity ratio](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/karachi-reports-41pc-coronavirus-positivity-ratio)

Pakistan on its own has already announced a Rs5 billion assistance package that includes food items, life-saving drugs, winter supplies and shelter besides providing assistance in the fields of health, education and training.

More importantly, the federal government had established the Afghanistan Inter-Ministerial Cell headed by National Security Advisor Dr Moeed Yusuf as early as possible following the departure of US-led NATO forces in November 2021 as a major step as the policy formulation and implementation forum for various activities relating to providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. Members of this Cell come from the concerned ministries ranging from the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and also the representatives of he Customs, National Logistics Cell, Civil Aviation Authority, State Bank of Pakistan and Frontier Corps for ensuring smooth flow of the people and trade across the borders besides streamlining the humanitarian assistance measures being taken by Pakistan from time to time.

[Balochistan’s COVID-19 positivity ratio rises to 5.73%](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/balochistan-s-covid-19-positivity-ratio-rises-to-5-73-percent)

The Cell is working on comprehensive proposals for expansion of cooperation under the assistance package in the fields of health and education. A delegation led by the National Security Advisor is scheduled to pay a two-day visit to Afghanistan on January 18 and 19, 2021, in this regard.

It is appropriate to briefly mention the initiatives so far taken by the Afghanistan Inter-Ministerial Coordination Cell in furtherance of specific objectives and purposes of its being created.

As regards visa facilitation for international non-government organisations, the Interior Ministry has introduced an elaborate mechanism to facilitate relief activities in Afghanistan.

The main objective of new measures, according to the information available from official sources concerned, is to facilitate humanitarian assistance in the war-torn Afghanistan and both new international non-government organizations (INGOs) as well as already registered are and will be benefitting from it. An INGO applying for registration is required to submit a credentials verification letter from the concerned embassy, proof of registration in the country of origin and source of funding along with residence address and details of its designated staff. Scrutiny process will be completed in three weeks. The process of issuance of visas has also been made less cumbersome and time-consuming as the whole process is now completed in just 10 days. And that too without requiring any security clearance.

[Germany's inflation hit 30-year high in December](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/germany-s-inflation-hit-30-year-high-in-december)

The first consignment of 1800 metric tonnes of wheat as humanitarian assistance has since already been delivered. Under the assistance package, 50000 metric tonnes of wheat besides winter shelters and emergency medical supplies are being provided to Afghanistan as humanitarian assistance.

The Federal Ministry of National Services, Regulations and Coordination has also already dispatched a team of engineers and technicians to Afghanistan for the early completion of three new hospitals. Buildings of the three hospitals namely the Nishtar Hospital Jalalabad, Jinnah Hospital Kabul and Logari Hospital Logar have already been completed. Installation and commissioning of medical equipment worth Rs 2 billion is underway. A team of four Pakistani engineers along with technicians was working round the clock for bringing the medical equipment in use at the earliest. This would hopefully and surely help in achieving Universal Health Coverage in our brotherly neighbouring country.

Furthermore, more than 100,000 people travelling from across Afghan borders have also been successfully vaccinated against epidemic of Covid-19 so far at Torkham and Chaman border crossings. The Ministry has pledged to provide more than 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines for vaccination at the borders.

[Thick fog continues to envelop plain areas in Punjab](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/thick-fog-continues-to-envelop-plain-areas-in-punjab)

While Pakistan is determinedly and committed to providing all possible humanitarian assistance to the people of war-torn Afghanistan, it is sincerely hoped and expected that more Islamic countries will be forthcoming besides members of the international community in providing maximum possible assistance to the needy as well as deserving people of Afghanistan.

According to figures in this regard, as many as 22.8 million people, more than half the population of Afghanistan face acute food shortage while 3.2 million children and 700000 pregnant and lactating women are at the risk of acute malnutrition. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 665000 have been listed as the newly displaced within Afghanistan between January to September 2021 in addition to 2.9 million people already internally displaced by conflict in Afghanistan. Millions of Afghan refugees are already residing in the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan including Pakistan and Iran for decades together. A Fresh influx of Afghan refugees and irregular migration cannot be ruled out if the inflow of the required humanitarian assistance is not accelerated by the Islamic countries as well as the international community in the shortest possible time.