

AFGHANISTAN

Suffering prolonged conflict and insecurity as well as disasters such as droughts, floods and storms, Afghanistan faces one of the world's most severe and rapidly growing internal displacement crises. Enormous need remains for humanitarian assistance among more than half of the Afghan population.

With the announcement of the withdrawal of international troops, beginning in May and ending on 30 August 2021, the already uncertain situation rapidly deteriorated. 700,000 new IDPs were registered in 2021, bringing the total number of people internally displaced by conflict inside the country to 3.4 million, representing three-quarters of the country's 5.7 million IDPs. Since 2021 to date (August 2022), 182,590 newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection have been reported in neighbouring countries, mainly Pakistan. Nonetheless, 67,200 refugees and asylum seekers were registered in the country.

While the hostilities slightly waned in the last quarter of 2021, new internal displacement was registered in the last few months due to security reasons. Furthermore, in June 2022, over 1,000 people were killed by a 5.9 magnitude earthquake that hit eastern Afghanistan, damaging at least 70% of houses in the most impacted areas of Paktika and Khost provinces, and injuring 3,000 people, including 600 children.

Episcopal Conferences, NGOs, and faith based organisations joined their voices calling for prayer, solidarity and urgent action to protect the most vulnerable, while in January 2022, the UN launched the largest single country appeal ever for humanitarian assistance.

The Holy Father, who in August 2021 met with a few Afghan refugee families and appealed to everyone to "pray that dialogue and solidarity may lead to establishment of peaceful and fraternal coexistence", spoke again on June 2022 about the volatile situation in the country, particularly expressing his closeness to those affected by the earthquake.

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