



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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UNHCR PROVIDING URGENT ASSISTANCE FOR QUAKE VICTIMS

The UN refugee agency is making available tonnes of urgently needed family tents, blankets, stoves and other basic relief items for tens of thousands of Afghan refugees and Pakistanis made homeless by Saturday's south Asian earthquake.

Initially, the agency said, it will provide basic relief supplies for up to 100,000 people using its existing stockpiles throughout the region. Some supplies from UNHCR's Peshawar warehouse, such as tents, kitchen sets and soap, are already being trucked to the badly affected Mansehra district in the North West Frontier Province.

"UNHCR has emergency stockpiles in Pakistan, in neighbouring Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world that can be provided quickly to the victims, but we need the help of helicopters or other transport to get these supplies to people in the most affected areas," UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said in Geneva.

"We are extremely concerned about those who have been left with no shelter, no heat and none of the basic essentials required for daily subsistence. They include, in addition to the many Pakistani victims, possibly thousands of Afghan refugees in many camps that are now inaccessible and without communications."

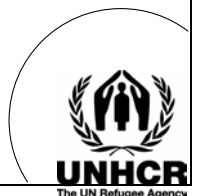
North West Frontier Province (NWFP), one of the areas affected by the earthquake, hosts 887,000 Afghan refugees in several camps. UNHCR staff in Peshawar have been trying to determine conditions for some 100,000 Afghan refugees in three camps in the Haripur district of NWFP -- Panian, Padhana and Ghazi. UNHCR provides regular assistance to the camps, including water, sanitation, health care and primary education. The agency is also particularly concerned about nearly 45,000 Afghan refugees in four camps in the Mansehra district, where whole villages have reportedly been flattened. The camps are Ichiran, Sheikhabad, Barary and Khaki.

Overall, NWFP hosts 887,466 Afghan refugees in camps.

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Guterres said UNHCR can immediately provide relief items from its Peshawar warehouse, including family-sized winter tents for up to 14,000 people, hospital tents, plastic sheets, kitchen sets, and other items like mattresses and soap. The agency's Quetta warehouse, further to the south along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, also has thousands of tents, plastic sheeting, blankets, kerosene stoves, cooking kits, sleeping bags and other items. UNHCR staff in Afghanistan were also checking on possible supplies there which could be provided for the disaster victims. But transport is needed to get all of these items to the quake-affected areas.

In Geneva, Guterres asked UNHCR's emergency and logistics staff to look into the possibility of providing other supplies from the agency's global relief stockpiles further afield, including in Dubai, Jordan, Copenhagen and elsewhere.

All of these supplies would need to be replenished quickly, however, so UNHCR can meet any other emergency demands and contingencies. This would mean additional funds would be needed from donors.

UNHCR has 11 offices and more than 420 staff throughout Pakistan and is one of the main operational humanitarian agencies in the region. It has worked in Pakistan for some 25 years and is currently involved in the repatriation of more than 3.5 million Afghan refugees.

Australians can support UNHCR's relief efforts in response to the earthquake in Pakistan by donating to Australia for UNHCR on 1300 361 288 or visit www.unrefugees.org.au

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