

A Look at Humanitarian Aid in the Recent Floods in Iran



By: Negar Paidar Darian
Human rights researcher

Humanitarian aid is in fact aid that is provided for people who need it in material, food, medicine and clothing form. Usually these assistances are for short periods, till in the long term governments and other institutions can replace them, and often the aid is provided to the displaced, refugees, victims of natural disasters, armed conflicts and famine. The main aim of humanitarian aid is saving lives and reduction of pain and suffering and respect to human dignity. In the recent months United States imposed unilateral sanctions against Iran have created difficult conditions for the provision of some humanitarian and vital materials such as medicines, and furthermore, the prohibition of financial and humanitarian transactions are not included in these sanctions, but what we see in practice is a shortage of humanitarian goods and a sharp rise in the cost of their provision, which creates all sorts of problems and as a result of these sanctions, the humanitarian system loses its function which is the provision of dignity and reduction of pain and suffering.

In this report we take a look at aid and relief that was provided for the flood-hit regions of Iran. This relief more or less was affected by ongoing sanctions. Was the reason why in practice no financial aid was given to Iran in this crisis, solely the wishes of countries and international organizations based on refusal to provide financial aid, or fear of the repercussions of financial transaction with Iran? Fundamentally, is there any path left for financial transactions?

This report is will review three aids which are country aid, international organizations aid and domestic aid.

Introduction

Heavy rains and flash floods have affected more than 2,000 cities and towns across Iran, according to the Iranian Red Crescent. This is the largest disaster to hit Iran in more than 15 years. An estimated 10 million people have been affected in some way, including more than half a million have been displaced from their homes. 84 have died, and around 20,573 persons were injured.¹ At least 54,000 houses have been destroyed and another 90,000 have been damaged. 1,500 schools have been damaged and 200 of them must be rebuilt and also floods

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-floods-leave-people-limited-access-life-saving-health-services>

caused damage to 39 public libraries.² The floods have fully and partially destroyed 1040 health facilities and 81 hospitals, leaving patients with limited access to essential and life-saving health services.³ Agricultural areas were heavily hit, 1 million hectares of farmland being flooded, with crops ahead of harvest and livestock being lost. The drinking water system has been repaired in a majority of affected villages; power has been restored in some 60% of the affected communities. The main needs are in the sectors of water,



Heavy rains and flash floods have affected more than 2,000 cities and towns across Iran, according to the Iranian Red Crescent

sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, shelter, agriculture and livelihoods. According to the authorities, the disaster has caused some USD 4.1 billion of damage on various sectors (including USD 1.5 billion in agriculture).⁴ The conditions that the floods have created for the country, it put people in need of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid which in fact is the provision of food, medicine and equipment and materials to the people is required. From the international law aspect it is based on the solidarity of Mankind, meaning that not only the local government where the incident or natural disaster has taken place, but the international community also must respond to the people caught in critical conditions. Sending relief towards the protection of the right to life, ease of pain and suffering and respect to human dignity is fulfilled as Mankind's right. This relief is done by various international actors which include the local government, neighbouring and non-neighbouring countries, national and international organizations and the private sector. In this report under the headings of national assistance, international organizations' assistance and domestic organizations' assistance, we take a look at the relief that was sent to the recent flood regions of Iran.

1 – National Assistance

The local government of the place of incident or natural disaster As the country where the disaster struck, aside from the humanitarian aspects, the Iranian government is legally obliged to provide internal aid and relief. The government must immediately after the occurrence of disaster provide relief and also facilitate ways for emergency relief. In this regards first of all allocation of some of the country's budget for unforeseen and emergency circumstances must be part of the budget draft legislation. In the Islamic Republic of Iran,

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-starts-reconstruction-schools-flood-hit-areas>

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-floods-leave-people-limited-access-life-saving-health-services>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-floods-appeal-n-mdrir002-operation-update-03>

five percent of the country's overall budget is allocated for compensation for unforeseen unconventional events. Secondly, the movements in infrastructure budgets too have been considered for needed instances, therefore the capacity of the 2019 budget and related laws, resources exceeding 6.4 billion dollars facilitates for support of flood victims and reconstruction of infrastructures and agricultural sectors.⁵ Although according to calculations the damage caused by the floods has been estimated at 8.333 million dollars^{6,7}.

Also insurance companies and banks are another method for provision of the government's budget. Ultimately if required, with the permission of the Supreme Leader, the government can withdraw from the National Development Fund, which in fact can withdraw with the oil revenue surplus over the years. Another of the government's duties is the organization and collection of public and various domestic and international organizations' donations and assistances. Furthermore in the recent floods the armed forces were also present for sending aid and relief.

1 – 2 – Rest of Nations

Aside from the local government where the disaster has taken place has the duty to provide aid relief to its citizens, the government must also ask the international community for help and facilitate emergency aid routes, particularly if the government itself is not able to and does not have enough means to undertake extensive tasks.

The international community's responsibility begins when the local government where the disaster took place is not able to help its citizens. Governments have a major role in providing humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, countries bordering the affected country also are obliged to create emergency routes for aid relief to the country.

In short, the assistance of other countries' assistances in the recent floods were:

- Through the German Red Cross Society, the German government provided 40 motorized rubber dinghies and individual rescue equipment for floods 300,000 Euros.
- Jointly with the government of the Russian Federation, the Emergency Situations Ministry of Armenia donated 250 bed sheets, 4000 blankets, 20 M10 tents and 20 M30 tents.⁸
- The French government donated 114 water pumps, 210 tents (18 tones, and 37 sq./m)
- The government of the Republic of Azerbaijan donated 17 trucks filled with emergency relief that included blankets, sheets, pillows, pillowcases, bed covers, kitchen equipment, life jackets, 5 people's tents, water pumps, boats, overalls,

⁵ <http://yon.ir/cPaca>

⁶ Exchange rate: 1\$= 42000 IR Rials

⁷ <http://yon.ir/EzUhf>

⁸ <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/83270851>

rescue clothes and two Caterpillar diggers.

- The Oman government sent 7 planes loaded with living, food and rescue materials to the approximate weight of 100 tons that included rice, flour, dates, lentils, sugar, oil, tea, powdered milk, 6 by 4 tents, blankets, pillows, sheets and 10 boats.

- The South Korean government announced 200 thousand dollars in aid through the International Rescue Federation. To-date this remains a pledge and no transaction has taken place and nothing been given to Iran.

- The Georgian government sent a shipment containing 130 stretchers, 50 stretcher mattresses, 130 blankets, 50 sleeping bags, 300 water containers and 200 water purifier systems.

- The Indian government sent a shipment of 917 packages that include 1750 single blankets, 1750 double blankets, 2000 kg of plastic bags 1080 canned food, 1000 kg of canned peas, 500 kg of cans of dehydrated potatoes, 1020 kg of fried onions, 999 family tents (111 tents, 111 bridge boxes and base, 20 packages of road and 20 packages of hooks).

- The rescue unit of the Czech Republic Fire Department sent, tents, blankets, sleeping bags, power generators, power generator equipment swap drying pump and wooden pallets.⁹

- The Italian government sent rescue and hygiene packages that included 5 sixteen kilowatts power generators, 200 family tents, 5 motorized rubber dinghies, 300 hygiene kits, 1000 sheets, 60 rolls of plastic rapping, 600 Coleman's 5 ten-thousand litre water tanks, 5 ten-thousand litre watertanks, 250 solar powered lamps, 250 solar powered torches, 2550 blankets, 2 trauma emergency kits 2 emergency kits in support of trauma, medical equipment and cholera medicines.

- Through the World Food Program, the British government sent a 77,000 dollar aid package that included 52 blankets, 17 pallets of tents, 4 pallets of kitchen pots and pans. Through the European Commission the Austrian government sent relief in the form of 80 packages and 4 pallets to the weight of 3404 kg which included 2000 blankets, 5 sludge cleaners with couplings and hoses, and also stated readiness to send a second shipment of 1000 5 persons 1 month hygiene packages which



Medea Benjamin is the co-founder of the Code Pink organization and a contributor to several news websites, including The Huffington Post. In 2000, she was the Green Party candidate in California for the United States Senate, but didn't make it to the Congress

include washing powder, toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, disposable razors and tampons.

- The Chinese government sent 4000 waterproof tents, and also declared readiness to send another shipment that include 20 diesel powered generators, 300 sludge removal machines, 30 loudhailers and 400 tents.

- The Crisis and Support Center of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs sent twelve tons of humanitarian cargo, including 114 motorized pumps.¹⁰ As the above inventory shows no financial aid has been given to Iran, whereas cash humanitarian donations play a key role in getting crucial and urgent goods. This is while due to the United States unilateral sanctions, Iran is having problems with even importing crucial goods such as medicines into the country.

2 – International Organizations' Assistance



The UN and its bodies which include the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF, the World Food Program (WFP), all have duties in provision of humanitarian relief.

The UN and its bodies which include the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), (UNICEF), the World Food Program (WFP), all have duties in provision of humanitarian relief. Also nongovernmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent too have an important role in the coordination and provision of relief during crisis conditions.

In view of the crisis conditions and Iran's request for aid and assistance from other countries and organizations, the assistances of international governmental or private organizations were as follows:

- The Turkish Red Crescent Society sent 5 trucks filled with living and hygiene goods that included 320 tents, 1000 sheets, 100

hygiene kits, 1625 blankets, 360 kitchen pots sets, 60 oil heaters.

- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federations approved 500,000 dollars from the Federation's emergency fund

- The Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency: two water distribution equipment.

- The Kuwait Red Crescent Society first aid packs included 40 tons of aid food, medicines and medical equipment and 4 water pumps. Second aid packs that included 40 aid goods (1000 food packs at 23 kg a pack, 60 food packs at 10 kg a

¹⁰ <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iran/events/article/iran-humanitarian-aid-05-04-19>

pack, and 1200 bags of rice at 5 kg per bag, and also sent 2 representatives from the Kuwait Red Crescent (for 40 billion rials purchase of food and nonfood materials)

- The Japanese International Cooperation Agency sent around 6 tons of relief that include 140 domed tents, 50 light tents, 1150 sleeping packs, 100 plastic bags.

- French NGO Popular Relief sent relief shipment that included 4960 blankets, 274 pots and pans.

- The Office of the International Committee of Red Cross in Tehran provided 100,000 Euros in cash aid.

- The UAE Red Crescent and Saudi Red Crescent sent humanitarian aid at 80 tons that included 2500 food packages and 292 tents.

- The Iranian Hospital in Lebanon pledged 60,000 dollars from its popular assistances and hospital medical personnel. This is solely a pledge and not been paid.

- The Qatar Red Crescent cash relief to the amount of 410,000 Swiss Franks.

- The Iraq Red Crescent pledged 5000 dollars relief through International Relief Federation. This pledge has not been materialized to-date.

- The Iranian Consul General in Peshawar, Pakistan, and the region's people donated a cash contribution of RIs 1,320 billion (nearly 31,420 US dollars) to the Iranian Red Crescent.¹¹

- A French non-governmental organization, Secours Populaire Francais: has provided food and hygiene items worth 15,500 Euros which include rice, tuna, edible oil, sugar and beans.¹²

- The OPEC Fund for International Development has approved an emergency aid grants totaling US \$ 500000 in support of relief efforts in Iran.¹³ The grant will be used primarily for the purchase and distribution of tents, blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene kits and food items for the most vulnerable households.

- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has launched an international emergency appeal seeking 5.1 million Swiss francs to expand Red Crescent support to an additional 30,000 families (equivalent to about 150,000 people). The IFRC-supported part of the operation will focus on providing unconditional cash grants to each of these families.¹⁴

In these instances we observe limited and trivial amounts of pledged cash amounts received by international organizations such as the Red Cross. What is important is that due to US unilateral sanctions against Iran, according to the statement of the Red Crescent Society, cash transactions cannot take place, and to-date the pledged amounts or goods to their value have not been given to Iran. The only way for Iranians abroad and citizens of other countries to help the Red Crescent is to make payments into a charity account that the German Red Cross

¹¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/china-pakistan-offer-relief-aids-flood-affected-people>

¹² <https://m.reliefweb.int/report/3122453/iran-islamic-republic/france-supports-iran-flood-victims-once-again>

¹³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/ofid-approves-total-emergency-aid-us-1m-mozambique-and-iran-ifrc>

¹⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-floods-emergency-appeal-mdrir002>

has opened. Thus from the collection of these amounts the Iranian Red Crescent and German Red Cross undertake the review to undertake allocation of these payments to flood victims.¹⁵

3 – Domestic Iranian Organizations' Assistance

The Iranian Red Crescent Society is one of the most important organizations which is responsible for managing and collecting cash and noncash donations and also training of human resources for crisis situations in the country. The amount of assistance that has been given to the Red Crescent for the floods is 890 billion Rials in cash and 200 billion Rials in noncash forms.

In the recent floods, more than 18,000 Red Crescent relief workers – most of them volunteers – have been involved in these humanitarian response. Seventeen

Red Crescent helicopters along with 41 boats have been used to rescue people trapped by rising waters. In all, more than 457,000 people have been reached with Red Crescent services, including about 239,000 people who have been provided with temporary shelters.¹⁶

Alongside the Red Crescent 350 nongovernmental organizations¹⁷ have also been identifying, needs assessing and providing relief, such as the Imam Ali Students Society which altogether has provided 50 billion rials in cash and 50 billion noncash assistance to the organization, and cash relief from outside Iran has been in excess of 34,000 dollars. This NGO has announced its cash and

noncash assistances in its website.¹⁸

“
In the recent floods, more than 18,000 Red Crescent relief workers – most of them volunteers – have been involved in these humanitarian response

Conclusion

Humanitarian aid is an important part of international law for which there are numerous resolutions in the UN Security Council and General Assembly in this regard, such as the Draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters¹⁹. Each government and organization has the rights to the method

¹⁵ <http://dolat.ir/detail/320412>

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-floods-two-million-people-need-humanitarian-aid>

¹⁷ <http://yon.ir/fvZ17>

¹⁸ <https://sosapoverty.org/report/%d8%af%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%b4-%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%84%db%8c-%d8%b3%db%8c%d9%84-%d8%a8%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%b1-%db%b1%db%b3%db%b9%db%b8/>

¹⁹ http://legal.un.org/docs/?path=../ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft_articles/6_3_2016.pdf&lang=EF

and amount of relief they provide to the government of affected country. These reliefs include various activities such as getting food, shelters, education, hygiene support, which generally are in the form of goods and also cash funds in humanitarian aid, are given to individuals. Experience shows that cash funds be very effective, more practical and economic and based on the protection of human dignity during disasters due to the power of choice and control for getting food and necessary goods and based on people's needs it gives to organizations, and even strengthen local markets and jobs.

Although in the recent years according to the amount of cash relief in humanitarian aid have increased due to the crucial role they have, has increased²⁰ and the cash relief of governments has always been seen as a normal action in international law and customs of countries, but with regards to the recent floods in Iran, the effects of sanctions can be seen in the amount and type of assistance governments can provide. But we see that no country has the ability or dares to present cash assistance due to fear of America's punishment threats. We can clearly see the sacrificing of human rights and humanitarian aid due to political decisions based on force and bullying. Due to the inhuman sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States no paths have been left open for financial transactions. And therefore there are no distinctions between goods (medicines and crucial goods with other goods. Humanitarian needs during crisis and natural disasters are not just limited to blankets, food and ten, but the government is in urgent need of immediate reconstruction of destroyed infrastructures such as roads, bridges, homes, schools, farmlands, power stations, and telecommunications etc. all of which require substantial funds.

Cash assistance can also link longer-term recovery and government-led efforts to support affected citizens.

Among international organizations only two organizations (Red Crescent Society and the Red Cross) out the hundreds of organizations have provided cash relief, and 3 other cases have only pledged funds but not given any to Iran. Aside from the fact that these funds are low in amount, we still witness that cash reliefs have not been to the amounts needed and due to the illegal and inhuman sanctions imposed by America, international organizations usually do not have the inclination to provide cash relief and fundamentally there are no channels for doing such transactions.

It must be noted that there should be a study on the scenario where if this flood crisis occurred in a country which was not under sanctions, how much cash and noncash support we would see for that country?

²⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/state-world-s-cash-report-cash-transfer-programming-humanitarian-aid>