

European Commission allocates € 10 million for Sahrawi refugees in Algeria

Today the European Commission has allocated € 10 million to provide humanitarian and food aid to vulnerable Sahrawi refugees living in the refugee camps in south-west Algeria. This funding will be used to provide a regular and varied food supply. It will also contribute to improving their humanitarian situation by ensuring adequate access to basic services and the provision of essential relief such as healthcare, clean water and proper sanitation, tents and logistical assistance.

Commissioner Georgieva said: "One of my priorities as a Commissioner for Humanitarian aid and crisis response is to draw attention to the victims of humanitarian crises that no longer make the headlines. The Sahrawi refugees are suffering in what is one of the oldest and largely forgotten crises. The Commission is committed to assisting these vulnerable people until a political solution can be found to end their plight."

The Sahrawi refugees have been living in isolated camps in the Algerian desert for more than three decades with little or no livestock and no substantial income. The high percentage of people suffering from chronic malnutrition and anaemia is a serious public health problem. To combat this continuing crisis, the Commission is attempting to provide sufficient and diversified food, as well as improved hygiene and sanitary conditions, general healthcare and better water quality.

Background

Since 1975 tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees have been hosted by Algeria in four camps in the south-western region of Tindouf (El Aaiun, Awserd, Smara and Dakhla).

Their displacement resulted from of the conflict between Morocco and the separatist Polisario Front who claimed independence over an area in Western Sahara following Spain's withdrawal in 1975. Despite continued efforts to resolve the conflict in the framework of MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara) since 1991, negotiations have had no success to date. The latest UN resolution calls on the parties to continue negotiating and extends MINURSO's mandate by one year to 30 April 2011.

For further information: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm