

World Food Program says 270 million people worldwide on brink of starvation



Rome, December 13 (RHC)-- The World Food Program (WFP) says some 270 million people across the globe are on the verge of starvation, warning that a “hunger pandemic” can be worse than the ongoing pandemic caused by the COVID-19 disease.

Executive Director of the UN’s WFP David Beasley made the warning from the agency’s headquarters in Rome, Italy, on Thursday upon receiving the Nobel medal and diploma in a ceremony held online because of the coronavirus.

His comments came some two months after the WFP, which has coordinated medical logistics during the COVID-19 pandemic, was announced winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 for its efforts “to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.”

The agency, founded in 1961, is the largest humanitarian organization in the world combating famine, feeding tens of millions of people each year around the globe. In 2019 alone, it fed 97 million people worldwide.

“Because of so many wars, climate change, the widespread use of hunger as a political and military weapon, and a global health pandemic that makes all of that exponentially worse — 270 million people are marching toward starvation,” he said.

The United Nations food agency says a record 9.3 million people are now food insecure in Syria. The appalling figure is almost equal to the combined populations of Germany, Britain, France and Italy.

Beasley stressed that failure in meeting the needs of the said people would trigger a “hunger pandemic” capable of overshadowing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still raging across the world.

“And if that’s not bad enough, out of that 270 million, 30 million depend on us 100 percent for their survival,” he added, weeks after the agency expressed alarm about the risk of famine in Burkina Faso, South Sudan, northeastern Nigeria and Yemen.

WFP officials are expected to travel to Oslo at a later stage to deliver the traditional Nobel lecture, which is given in Oslo City Hall before dignitaries, including Norway’s King Harald. “This Nobel Peace Prize is more than a thank you. It is a call to action. Famine is at humanity’s doorstep,” the WFP chief further said, adding, “Food is the pathway to peace.”

Before Beasley’s comments, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee Berit Reiss-Andersen praised the WFP for representing “exactly the kind of international cooperation and commitment that the world is in dire need of today.”

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