



Sylvia Borren, GCAP co-chair's Statement Dated 21-05-09:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO ADDRESS THE DISPLACEMENT OF MILLIONS AFFECTED BY WAR, SAYS GCAP.

1 June 2009 – The world's largest anti-poverty alliance, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), is demanding that the government of Pakistan make it a priority to address the situation in the northern region of where over 2.5 million people have been displaced due to extremism and growing military operation.

According to GCAP Pakistan, the conflict is triggering one of the fastest displacements of people in the last 15 years. Homes are destroyed, farms devastated, and livestock left with no care. In addition the homeless have been displaced into a hostile situation. The camps are smote with scorching heat, poor sanitation and unavoidable health issues like diarrhea, malaria and snake bites left potentially fatal because of a lack of venom antidote. The displaced people are in dire need of water, food and shelter as many are left with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

“GCAP is demanding that the government takes proper measures for the protection of women and children from societal abuse, and that appropriate standards be met in the camps where the displaced people are living,” said Sylvia Borren, GCAP co-chair. **“We want to see a proper but rapid registration process, food having standard calories, health and sanitation facilities, particularly for women and children.”**

Various reports show that 15 to 20 percent of internally displaced people are living in government or NGO camps, while the rest are living with relatives or in temporary shelters in school buildings around Swabi, Mardan and other cities and districts in the North-West Province.

There are some reports that collateral damage is great and on the increase due to the aerial bombardment by security forces. The army is using aerial bombardment by gunship, helicopters, and warplanes indiscriminately in Matta, Mingora, Bunnair and other troubled areas and the displaced communities report that shells are regularly pounding the civilians.

GCAP is asking that the government come out with the exact number of civilians and military killed in the operation so far and to substantiate their claims with solid evidence, and the military should in any case avoid collateral damage.

GCAP fully stands with the internally displaced people in Pakistan in this time of need and misery. We understand that this issue needs a concerted and coordinated effort by all relevant quarters of civil society and government.

GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

The government of Pakistan owes its citizens their rights bestowed under the constitution of Pakistan and international covenants and conventions signed by the country.

GCAP recognizes that people as well as governments have the right to seek for international assistance, and that international agencies including the UN, have the obligation to assist the government at this time.

“Displacement can be the beginning of a process where citizens can be made to disappear within the national discourse. There are global examples of this, like in Rwanda, 15 years ago, which virtually destroy the displaced. Such a catastrophe should be avoided at all costs,” said Borren.

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