

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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DROWNED: THE HUMAN COST OF DEADLY FLOODS IN PAKISTAN

Heavy rains and flooding between June and August 2022 have led to what the UN has termed an “unprecedented climate-induced disaster” in Pakistan, with deaths, injuries, large scale displacement, and a loss of livelihoods in the country. The flood waters are beginning to recede, and the medium to long term impact on people’s economic and social rights in Pakistan are becoming clearer.

As world leaders are meeting to discuss climate and economic cooperation at COP27 and the G20, justice and support for those living at the intersections of climate and economic crises in Pakistan must be at the top of the agenda. This statement is focussed on the human rights obligations of the international community, and in this context, Amnesty International is calling for increased international solidarity, particularly funding for immediate humanitarian assistance, climate adaptation, loss and damage, and debt relief, to address people’s urgent needs in Pakistan.

BACKGROUND

The rains and flooding have had a catastrophic impact on people’s lives and livelihoods. Around 33 million people have been affected.¹ Over 1,600 people were killed and over 12,800 people were injured.² About 7.9 million people have been internally displaced, and many are now living in relief camps and informal housing.³ Over 2 million houses have been damaged, as has a lot of public infrastructure. More than 1.1 million livestock have reportedly been killed, and 9.4 million acres of crop area in Pakistan was inundated in August, both of which have had grave consequences for agricultural productivity and people’s livelihoods.⁴ The floods have predominantly affected the provinces of Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and a total of 84 districts nationwide have been described as ‘calamity hit’ by the Government of Pakistan. The floods illustrate the human cost of the climate crisis and make state obligations to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs in Pakistan and to the broader climate crisis more urgent.

While a major international, humanitarian response was mounted in response to the floods, the scale of funding gaps indicates that far from enough is being done. In October 2022, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) identified 20.6 million people to ‘be in need’ and “requested US\$816 million to provide prioritised multi-sectoral aid and protection to 9.5 million people until 31 May 2023”.⁵ Individual agencies have highlighted funding gaps in their specific areas: For example the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has reported a funding gap of 85%;⁶ and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported a funding gap of 94%.⁷ There is a danger that as more time passes, international attention on the floods may reduce, diluting international commitment to providing needed humanitarian funds to Pakistan and to taking the significant steps required to address the climate crisis. Without adequate, coordinated action at the international level, it will be impossible for the lives, health and livelihoods of affected people in Pakistan – and wherever else climate disaster strikes – to be protected.

URGENT HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

Amnesty International referred to reports and needs assessments published by civil society and humanitarian actors and conducted multiple interviews with activists involved in the response to the floods in Pakistan, to better understand key human rights concerns and priorities resulting from the floods and the response to them.

¹ OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

² OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

³ OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

⁴ OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

⁵ OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

⁶ UNICEF, Pakistan Humanitarian Situation Report No.5, October 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/media/129696/file/Pakistan-Floods-Humanitarian-SitRep-October-2022.pdf>

⁷ FAO, Pakistan: Urgent Call for Assistance, <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1916en/cc1916en.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Pakistan has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil people's economic and social rights. These obligations also apply in times of extreme weather events and disasters. Where the government is unable to fulfil its obligations, it must request international assistance and cooperation.

According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, "States parties [to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights] have a joint and individual responsibility to cooperate in providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in times of emergency... Each State should contribute to this task to the maximum of its capacities... The economically developed States parties have a special responsibility and interest to assist the poorer developing States in this regard." Elsewhere, the Committee has also clarified that "international cooperation for development, and thus for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights is an obligation of all States. It is particularly incumbent upon those States which are in a position to assist others in this regard."

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities applies to the climate crisis. Wealthier countries that are responsible for the most carbon emissions must take the lead in climate mitigation efforts by decarbonizing their economies more quickly and by financing climate mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage in lower income countries that contributed little to the climate crisis.

In September 2022, in a joint statement, several UN Special Rapporteurs called on states to "step up their assistance to monsoon flood victims in Pakistan and ensure that international recovery efforts are guided by human rights law and standards." According to the UN Secretary-General, "Pakistan needs massive financial support to respond to these crises... That support is entirely necessary. And it is not a matter of solidarity. It's a matter of justice."

Regarding the right to health, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), Pakistan is on the verge of a public health disaster.⁸ Access to health care is severely limited due to the floods, and stagnant water and inadequate living conditions are leading to greater health concerns. While flood waters are receding, land is still submerged in certain areas.⁹ 10% of all health facilities in the country have been either damaged or destroyed.¹⁰ Less than 50% of all people needing health services are currently able to access health facilities.¹¹ The WHO reported that routine health services have also been seriously disrupted, such as immunization campaigns, the polio vaccine campaign, and the treatment of some chronic health conditions.¹² Medicines and health infrastructure were washed away by the floods, and the destruction of transport and roads continue to adversely impact access to health care. Several assessments by humanitarian actors have confirmed that people in flood-affected areas are concerned about their access to health care.¹³ Simultaneously, there is an increase in illnesses linked to stagnant water and poor access to clean water and sanitation facilities. There is a malaria outbreak in 32 districts, increased incidence of diarrhoea¹⁴ and skin conditions linked to stagnant water and inadequate sanitation and spread of other water-borne diseases.¹⁵ As one activist told Amnesty International, "We have open areas, the water is around. The water is stinking and getting dirtier day by [the] day. The mosquitoes are huge."¹⁶

Guaranteeing clean water and sanitation are also key priorities in flood affected areas and featured in almost every conversation Amnesty International had with people working in Pakistan's humanitarian response. Inadequate access to water and sanitation is particularly key for people who have been displaced and are living in informal housing and

⁸ WHO, WHO Emergency Appeal: Health Crisis in Flood-Affected Pakistan, 5 October 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/03-_pakistan_appeal-04-oct_2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de4bd88b_1&download=true

⁹ WHO, WHO Emergency Appeal: Health Crisis in Flood-Affected Pakistan, 5 October 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/03-_pakistan_appeal-04-oct_2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de4bd88b_1&download=true

¹⁰ WHO, WHO Emergency Appeal: Health Crisis in Flood-Affected Pakistan, 5 October 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/03-_pakistan_appeal-04-oct_2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de4bd88b_1&download=true

¹¹ WHO, WHO Emergency Appeal: Health Crisis in Flood-Affected Pakistan, 5 October 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/03-_pakistan_appeal-04-oct_2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de4bd88b_1&download=true

¹² WHO, WHO Emergency Appeal: Health Crisis in Flood-Affected Pakistan, 5 October 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/03-_pakistan_appeal-04-oct_2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de4bd88b_1&download=true

¹³ OCHA, Revised Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 31 May 2023 (Issued 04 Oct 2022),

<https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/revised-pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-31-may-2023-issued-04-oct-2022>

¹⁴ OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 28 October 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

¹⁵ OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 28 October 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

¹⁶ Phone Interview with Amnesty International, October 2022

shelter.¹⁷ UNOCHA has noted that “limited funds are affecting the scale-up of the WASH response,” with only 12% of the program being funded. Food security has also been threatened by the flooding. As a result of rising prices, and disrupted wage earning, supply chains, and local agricultural production, 1.9 million people need food security and agricultural assistance. Of these, according to the FAO, “nearly 510 000 people are only one step away from catastrophic levels of food insecurity.”¹⁸ The crisis has also deepened already high rates of child malnutrition, with data indicating that “1.6 million children could suffer from severe acute malnutrition and require treatment in Sindh and Balochistan flood-affected areas.”¹⁹ Amnesty International spoke with activists working with flood affected communities who confirmed challenges with respect to access to food. One activist explained, “They say they keep the pot on the stove just to tell their children that something is cooking but actually there is nothing.”²⁰ In October 2022, the WFP (one of the agencies involved in the food and nutrition response) said that only 19% of its response plan was funded.²¹ As winter approaches, people displaced by the floods face the additional challenge of ensuring they have adequate shelter and access to a way to stay warm and safe.

The flooding has impacted marginalized groups in particular and often in more severe ways. Older persons,²² children,²³ and refugee communities²⁴ face specific impacts due to educational disruptions, mobility challenges, and pre-existing barriers around accessing economic and social rights. The floods have also had a distinct impact on women. According to a recent Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, “The impact of the floods is likely to exacerbate already existing gender inequalities, revealing serious differences in safety, education, decision-making, and employment.”²⁵ Around 130,000 women affected by the floods are pregnant, and face serious challenges in accessing health care.²⁶ Losses in agricultural land and livestock threaten women in particular, as they face an increased risk of gender-based violence “due to aggravated household tensions, harassment, and abuse related to displacement and lack of secure infrastructure”.²⁷ Anecdotally, activists who spoke with Amnesty International confirmed these findings and shared additional specific challenges that women they worked with experienced as a result of the floods. This included difficulties in accessing sanitary products, lack of health care especially for women who were pregnant, increased domestic violence, and a loss of livelihoods.

A SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE CRISIS

The floods show the intersecting impact of a social, economic and climate-related crisis in the country. While a well-funded humanitarian response is essential, it is not sufficient. A long-term multi-sectoral response that includes the government of Pakistan and high carbon-emitting countries is essential.

The harm caused by the recent rains and flooding track and deepen inequalities and poverty. Nineteen of the 25 poorest districts in the country were affected by the floods; and poverty rates for many flood-affected districts were already much higher than the national average.²⁸ Government estimates indicate that the floods will increase the national poverty rate “3.7 to 4.0 percentage points, pushing between 8.4 and 9.1 million people into poverty”. Multidimensional poverty will increase by 5.9 percentage points, meaning that an additional 1.9 million households will be pushed into non-monetary

¹⁷ OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 28 October 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

¹⁸ FAO, Pakistan: Urgent Call for Assistance, <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1916en/cc1916en.pdf>

¹⁹ OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 28 October 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

²⁰ Phone Interview with Amnesty International, October 2022

²¹ WFP Pakistan Situation Report, 19 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/wfp-pakistan-situation-report-19-october-2022>

²² HelpAge International, Pakistan Floods: Rapid Needs Assessment of Older People, 24 October 2022, <https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/pakistan-floods--rapid-needs-assessment-of-older-people-24-oct.pdf>

²³ UNICEF Pakistan Humanitarian Situation Report No.5 (Floods) October 2022, 31 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/unicef-pakistan-humanitarian-situation-report-no5-floods-october-2022>

²⁴ See for example, UNHCR, Pakistan’s disastrous floods uproot refugees and citizens, 2 September 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/stories/2022/9/6311c7f54/pakistans-disastrous-floods-uproot-refugees-citizens.html>

²⁵ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>, p 45

²⁶ OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 28 October 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

²⁷ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>, p 46. See also UNFPA, Statement by UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem on the devastating floods in Pakistan, 2 September 2022, <https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-unfpa-executive-director-dr-natalia-kanem-devastating-floods-pakistan>

²⁸ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>, p 18

poverty. The intensity of poverty is projected to increase as well, with the number of extremely poor people living more than 20% below the poverty line increasing from 18 to 25–26 million.²⁹

August brought more than three times Pakistan's usual monthly rainfall. A scientific analysis found that the rainfall total for summer 2022 and shorter spikes of very heavy rain in August were 1 in 100-year events – both of which occurred in the same year. The authors concluded that climate change 'likely increased intense rainfall in Pakistan'; thus, attributing the scale of the rains and flooding in part to climate change.³⁰ Pakistan's vulnerability to extreme weather due to climate change was also evident in heatwaves earlier in the year. From March-May 2022, Pakistan recorded some of the highest temperatures in the country in the last 60 years, with serious implications for people's health, lives and livelihoods, particularly for groups who have been historically marginalized.³¹ A rapid attribution study undertaken by climate scientists found that climate change made the 2022 heatwave "30 times more likely,"³²; there were similar findings after the 2016 heatwave in Pakistan.³³ As UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "No country deserves this fate, but particularly not countries like Pakistan that have done almost nothing to contribute to global warming."³⁴ Indeed, Pakistan and many other countries, communities, and activists at the frontlines of the climate crisis have been at the forefront of growing demands for funding for loss and damage from historical emitters.³⁵

Pakistan was facing a longer-term economic crisis at the time the floods began: GDP growth was slowing, foreign reserves were declining, and inflation was rising.³⁶ Even before the impact of the floods was assessed, the IMF had recommended the need to "contain spending" and strengthen "public finances and reduce the debt burden to more sustainable levels, while creating space for much-needed social and development spending".³⁷ Of particular note is the fact that Pakistan's debt repayments in the medium term were high.³⁸ The floods have further contributed to this economic crisis. The total damage caused by the floods is estimated at US\$14.9 billion, total loss at US\$15.2 billion, and total reconstruction needs at US\$16.3 billion.³⁹ A recent Post-Disaster Needs Assessment noted that the loss in GDP because of the floods was projected to be 2.2% in 2022, with the agricultural sector seeing one of the biggest contractions.⁴⁰

More spending is needed to rebuild and to protect people's rights, and calls have been made for debt relief for Pakistan. According to media reports, a draft paper by the UNDP in September argued that "Pakistan should seek to suspend international debt repayments and restructure loans."⁴¹ An October 2022 paper by the UNDP on the ongoing debt crisis listed Pakistan as one of the 54 most debt vulnerable countries in the world and said, "the international community must urgently step-up debt relief efforts to avert a deepening development crisis."⁴² UN Secretary General Guterres said, "My

²⁹ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>

³⁰ F Otto et al, "Climate change likely increased extreme monsoon rainfall, flooding highly vulnerable communities in Pakistan", <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/wp-content/uploads/Pakistan-floods-scientific-report.pdf>

³¹ Pakistan: Extreme weather: Searing heatwaves and torrential rains in Pakistan, and their impact on Pakistan July 8, 2022, ASA 33/5828/2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/5828/2022/en/>

³² WMO, Climate change made heatwaves in India and Pakistan "30 times more likely", 24 May 2022, <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/climate-change-made-heatwaves-india-and-pakistan-30-times-more-likely>

³³ Y Imada et al, "Climate change increased the likelihood of the 2016 heat extremes in Asia", *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 99(1), S97-S101.

³⁴ UN News, "In flood-hit Pakistan, Guterres appeals for 'massive' global support, tougher action on climate change", 9 September 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126331>

³⁵ See for example, S Rehman, "Why should we in Pakistan pay for catastrophic floods we had no part in causing?", 21 September 2022, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/21/pakistan-floods-big-oil-gas-bill>

³⁶ IMF, IMF Executive Board Completes the Combined Seventh, and Eighth Reviews of the Extended Fund Facility for Pakistan, 29 August 2022, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2022/08/29/pr22293-imf-executive-board-completes-reviews-of-extended-fund-facility-pakistan>

³⁷ IMF, Pakistan: Seventh, and Eighth Reviews of the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility, Requests for Waivers of Nonobservance of Performance Criteria, and for Extension, Augmentation, and Rephasing of Access-Press Release; Staff Report; Staff Statement; and Statement by the Executive Director for Pakistan, IMF Country Report No. 22/288, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2022/09/01/Pakistan-Seventh-and-Eighth-Reviews-of-the-Extended-Arrangement-under-the-Extended-Fund-522800>

³⁸ IMF, Pakistan: Seventh, and Eighth Reviews of the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility, Requests for Waivers of Nonobservance of Performance Criteria, and for Extension, Augmentation, and Rephasing of Access-Press Release; Staff Report; Staff Statement; and Statement by the Executive Director for Pakistan, IMF Country Report No. 22/288, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2022/09/01/Pakistan-Seventh-and-Eighth-Reviews-of-the-Extended-Arrangement-under-the-Extended-Fund-522800>

³⁹ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>, p 14

⁴⁰ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, 28 October 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment>, p 17

⁴¹ "Flood-hit Pakistan should suspend debt repayments, says UN policy paper", 23 September 2022, <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/flood-hit-pakistan-should-suspend-debt-repayments-says-un-policy-paper>

⁴² António Guterres (UN Secretary-General) and Shehbaz Sharif (Pakistan Prime Minister) on the situation in Pakistan at the Climate Implementation Summit, 7 November 2022, <https://www.undp.org/publications/dfs-avoiding-too-little-too-late-international-debt-relief>

appeal to the international financial institutions and to the G20 that will be meeting soon in Bali is to create the conditions for mechanisms of debt relief of middle-income countries impacted by natural disasters the size of the one Pakistan had, in order to allow resources to be devoted to the investments in resilience and in recovery and reconstruction that are necessary ... it is important to review the way the international financial system works in order for Pakistan to have access to effective debt relief and to have access to the concessional funding that is necessary for the levels of reconstruction and rehabilitation that are huge.”⁴³

RECOMMENDATIONS

World leaders are meeting to discuss climate change and the world economy at COP-27 and the G20 summit. Keeping in mind the catastrophic impacts of global inaction on climate change on economic and social human rights, they should:

- Urgently scale up their financial commitments to Pakistan’s humanitarian response plans; ensure that people’s economic and social rights are adequately protected at this difficult time; and provide the financial and technical support necessary for medium to long term recovery.
- Support the Government of Pakistan in designing and funding health and social protection systems, and other human rights-consistent adaptation measures, that protect people against all likely impacts of economic crises and climate change, in particular moving towards universal approaches to social protection.
- Ensure that human rights are central in all responses to the floods, including in the short, medium and long-term. Response efforts should ensure the right to information and participation in decision-making of all groups, particularly those most affected. They should accommodate the needs of historically marginalized groups and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Given that additional financing will be necessary to respond to the multiple crises Pakistan faces, financing should be coordinated and
- Bilateral lenders, and countries who are part of multi-lateral creditor organizations, should ensure debt relief and consider all options for debt relief including debt cancellation, at this stage.
- Refrain from stipulations in economic reform programmes, loan contracts, debt repayments, and other aspects of fiscal policy programming that may undermine the government’s ability to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights.
- Any funding for climate adaptation in Pakistan should be additional to humanitarian aid and overseas development assistance, and should be in the form of grants, not loans.
- Ensure maximum transparency and public scrutiny of future aid and loan agreements, and that measures to guarantee genuine and effective participation of all persons potentially affected by reform measures are built into programme design, implementation and monitoring.
- Provide adequate resources to address and provide remedy for loss and damage identified in Pakistan, ensuring all responses to loss and damage are inclusive, intersectional, gender-responsive, and promote equality for individuals who are already marginalized.
- Commit new and additional climate finance to less-wealthy countries, including Pakistan, for human rights-consistent mitigation and adaptation measures in order to reach the 100 billion USD annual goal this year and provide the cumulative amount of 600 billion USD over the period 2020-2025 to make up for earlier gaps.

⁴³ UNDP, Avoiding ‘Too Little Too Late’ on International Debt Relief, 11 October 2022, <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1p/k1palz5ilm>