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The Associated Press

Aid groups warn more than 2 million Afghans face food shortages after drought

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More than 2 million people are facing food shortages in northern Afghanistan after a drought and the situation could get even worse if winter snows cut off access to remote regions, a group of aid agencies warned Friday.



The nine agencies, including Oxfam, said in a joint statement that the Afghan

government and the international community must ensure that people who require food assistance receive it quickly.

“Time was already running short. With snow falling in the highlands, the situation for many people has now become critical and soon most of the region will be affected by snow,” Manohar Shenoy, country director for Oxfam in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

The statement said a severe drought had affected areas scattered across 14 northern provinces, while a U.N. appeal for the crisis remained only 7 percent funded.

The U.N. appealed for \$142 million in early October. At the time, the international body said that drought conditions had emerged in the north, northeast and west of Afghanistan because of little snowfall last winter. The U.N. said a lack of water led to crop shortfalls of up to 80 percent in rain-fed wheat crops.

“Donors, the Afghan government and aid agencies need to focus on ensuring assistance will reach the people who need it most, as quickly as possible,” Shenoy said. “Donors and relief agencies must remain vigilant and responsive as more resources will be required if the situation deteriorates because of a harsh winter.”

Afghanistan also saw more violence on Friday. A roadside bomb exploded near a playground, killing four children and wounding six.

The children were between the ages of 4 and 11, said Ahmad Zia Abdulzia, a spokesman for the governor of eastern Nangarhar province. The bomb exploded in the province’s Behsud district.

Insurgents often plant roadside bombs to target Afghan security forces or international troops. The devices usually detonate when someone steps or drives over them.

One such device on Friday killed a member of the NATO-led military force in southern Afghanistan, the coalition said without providing further details. So far 18 foreign troops have been killed this month, for a total of 508 since the start of the year.

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