



Photo: ECHO/Daniela Cavari

### Facts & Figures

- Tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees live in 4 camps in the Algerian desert.
- European Commission humanitarian aid has been continuously provided since 1993.
- Latest funding decision, January 2012: € 10 million

## A LONG-LASTING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

For over 30 years, several tens of thousands Sahrawi refugees have been living in the region of Tindouf, in the heart of the Algerian desert. Since 1993 the European Commission has helped to meet their basic needs for food, water, housing and medical care with €184 million. The funds are provided through the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO).

### Background

When Spain pulled out of its colony of Western Sahara in 1975, it handed over control of two-thirds of the territory to Morocco and one-third to Mauritania. The Polisario Front, founded in 1973 by the opponents of the Spanish colonization, proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976 and established a government-in-exile.

Morocco and the SADR were left face-to-face when Mauritania decided to yield its territory in 1979. Although the two warring factions accepted mediation from the United Nations in 1991, up to the present date the conflict is unresolved and without a solution for the Sahrawian people.

Caught in the crossfire, the Sahrawi refugees installed themselves in the region of Tindouf in 1975 hoping to return home. Today, they live in four refugee camps - Dakhla, Smara, Laâyoune and Ausserd.

The climate in this region is extremely harsh. Access to basic resources such as food, water, healthcare, housing and education is very limited. For their survival, the Sahrawi refugees rely heavily on international aid.

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) department started to help meet the basic needs of the refugees in 1993. In 2012, it allocated €10 million to improve their living conditions.

Food aid is a major component of this funding: €6 million have been allocated to supply not only basic food items such as wheat flour, barley, rice, oil, sugar and lentils, but also more nutritive and varied foods including fresh and vitamin-rich foods to combat malnutrition.

Water is one of the major concerns for the refugees. The Commission therefore contributes to ensuring the availability of sufficient safe drinking water. Projects have been launched to connect camps directly to water supplies through piped networks and water trucking, with the objective being to reduce the latter.

ECHO has also funded hygiene awareness campaigns and sanitation, particularly in schools, to reduce the risk of diseases. Provision of essential drugs and the training of local hospital personnel are also covered by the Commission's humanitarian department.

### € 10 million in EC humanitarian aid to be provided in 2012 for the Sahrawi refugees:

Food and Nutrition	
<b>WFP:</b> Basic food rations and supplementary feeding rations for malnourished children and women	90,000 rations
<b>Oxfam:</b> Fresh fruit and vegetable distributions	about 90,000 beneficiaries
Basic health care; safe water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter	
<b>Spanish Red Cross:</b> Rehabilitation of latrines in schools and nurseries and sensitization on hygiene	about 23,000 beneficiaries
<b>UNHCR:</b> Provision of drinking water supply and logistics	about 90,000 beneficiaries
<b>Medicos International:</b> Distribution and management of essential drugs, capacity building	about 90,000 beneficiaries



Photos: left ECHO/E. Freixa, right ECHO/Daniela Cavini

## ABOUT EUROPEAN COMMISSION HUMANITARIAN AID

The Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) is part of the European Commission, the European Union's executive arm. Through ECHO funding, millions of people are helped each year in more than 70 countries through 200 partners (international NGO's, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and specialised UN agencies).



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