

# Afghanistan: Short-term emergency can 'derail' years of progress, warns UN official

Even though Afghans today have better prospects for a semblance of peace than at any time in the past few years, immediate risks facing the country can seriously jeopardize progress and derail aspirations for a peaceful, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, a senior United Nations official warned on Friday.

Speaking to the press at the UN Headquarters, in New York, Toby Lanzer, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan, highlighted major achievements in the country, including economic progress for the third year in a row as well as upcoming parliamentary elections in October and presidential elections in April next year.

However, alongside these Afghanistan also saw the killings of 13 journalists on the job – the highest number in the world, 23 aid workers lost their lives, 37 were badly injured and 74 abducted, he added

"Afghanistan is undergoing a terrible drought, the worst in many, many years and now over 5.5 million people are in need of emergency relief," said Mr. Lanzer, noting that in the past few weeks alone, more than a quarter million people have been fleeing their homes, "looking for any way to get by."

"Winter is on its way, and in Afghanistan, winter bites hard," he added.

Of particular concern is the serious shortfall in funds for relief work, said Mr. Lanzer, urging the international donor community for immediate resources.

"I am here to ring alarm bells because if we do not engage more on the short-term emergency relief requirements, the development gains that we have achieved over the past years ... could be lost," he warned.

Earlier this month, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowock, and Filippo Grandi, the High Commissioner for Refugees, visited the country and called for an urgent increase as well as sustained support for the humanitarian response.

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), the 2018 humanitarian [appeal](#) for Afghanistan is only a third funded, with all humanitarian response sectors lacking vital resources.