

Caritas Deplores Slashing of Humanitarian Assistance: A Betrayal of Global Responsibility

ROME – 26 February 2025 – Caritas Internationalis deplores the wave of drastic cuts to international development assistance that is sweeping through the world's richest countries. The UK's decision to cut its aid budget by 40% is just the latest display of cruel indifference to the poorest billion people in the world who face war, famine and dehumanising poverty. This will kill millions and betrays hundreds of millions more who will suffer greatly as a result.

On top of the freezing of all US assistance, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and the UK have also slashed their international assistance by **\$2 billion, \$2.4 billion, \$133 million, \$1.9 billion, and \$6 billion** respectively, tearing another \$12.5 billion away from the world's poorest billion people.

Caritas Internationalis is appalled by these governments' decisions to slash their Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets in favour of increased defence spending. This shift will have devastating consequences for millions of people worldwide, driving forced migration and undermining the very stability these countries seek to protect. Once again, the books of the richest nations are being balanced at the expense of the poorest people.

These decisions signal a dangerous retreat from global responsibility at a time of unprecedented humanitarian crises.

The impact of the U.S. funding freeze is already unfolding:

- Critical food assistance programmes have been suspended, pushing millions – especially in East Africa and the Middle East – to the brink of starvation. In Sudan, 24 million people are in urgent need of food, 12 million are at risk of starvation, while 750,00 people are in famine. In Ethiopia, 3 million people have lost essential services, while in DRC 1.2 million have been cut off from lifesaving assistance.
- Healthcare services have been affected, limiting access to vaccines, maternal care, and life-saving medicines. In Kenya, malnourished children are no longer receiving therapeutic food, putting them at risk of acute malnutrition and death.
- Support for conflict-affected regions has dwindled, fuelling further displacement and instability.

These are not abstract numbers on a budget sheet. These are lives lost, futures destroyed, and a world made more volatile.

With European governments following suit, the consequences can only be catastrophic. With famine looming in parts of Africa, wars raging in Ukraine and the Middle East, and climate disasters forcing entire communities from their homes, now is not the time to turn inward. Abandoning this commitment is not just a policy shift – it is a betrayal of moral and strategic responsibility.

These decisions also deal a serious blow to multilateralism at a time when the world urgently needs a strong framework for peace, stability, and development. This year, the UN Conference on Financing for Development will take place in Seville, Spain, in July, aiming, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, ***“to bring a measure of justice to the global economy and help bridge the deep***

divisions that afflict our world.” Cutting international aid now undermines these very efforts and weakens the global response to escalating humanitarian crises.

Alistair Dutton, Secretary General, Caritas Internationalis, noted:

“Caritas Internationalis deplores the wave of drastic cuts to international development assistance that is sweeping through the world’s richest countries. The UK’s decision to cut its aid budget by another 40% is just the latest display of cruel indifference to the poorest billion people in the world who face war, famine and dehumanising poverty. This will kill millions and betrays hundreds of millions more who will suffer greatly as a result.

We strongly urge all governments to reconsider these cruel cuts and honour their commitments to the world’s poorest people. The poorest people must not pay the price of defence; spending 0.7% of GNI on international development assistance must remain our standard; the sustainable development goals must remain our international objective. This isn’t about politics. It is about people and humanity.

We call on leaders across government, business, and civil society to oppose these cuts strongly. Turning away from the world’s most vulnerable is not just strategically reckless – endangering peace, stability and human life – it is morally indefensible. Now is the moment for leadership that prioritises compassion, solidarity, and a shared vision for a better world. We must not forsake those who need us most!”

About Caritas Internationalis

Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of 162 Catholic national relief, development, and social service organisations operating in more than 200 countries and territories across the world. We are an expression of the Church’s mission to preach the good news and contribute to the building of God’s Kingdom of dignity, justice and love for all. Our mandate comes from the life and words of Jesus Christ and from the vast wealth of Catholic teaching and in particular the Church’s social teaching. Caritas promotes integral human development and integral ecology by serving, accompanying, defending and listening to people living in poverty, whilst together caring for our common home. We respond to emergencies and natural human made and complex humanitarian crises, providing essential and social services, and health care. We speak against the causes of poverty and injustice, and work together, as brothers and sisters, advocating and campaigning for a just world build on love, peace, and solidarity. Our work is informed by reflecting on the ‘signs of the times’ through a ‘see, judge and act’ methodology. We strive to bring about long-term, positive impact to the lives of those we serve. This requires us to be both effective in our work and good stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

Caritas Internationalis: <https://www.caritas.org/2025/02/caritas-deplores-slashing-of-humanitarian-assistance-a-betrayal-of-global-responsibility/>, accessed 1 March 2025.