

Starvation in Afghanistan

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Millions of Afghans face food shortage Friday, September 19, 2008 11:07 AM

A poor harvest, the harshest winter in memory and widespread drought could mean a severe winter food shortage for millions of Afghans, aid officials say.

The grim forecasts generally cover small farmers in central and northern Afghanistan, affecting 9 million people, more than a quarter of the population, The New York Times reported Friday.

There are also growing fears of civil unrest fed by increasing economic hardship, worsening governmental disorder, deteriorating security, the accumulated pressure of returning refugees and the effects of rising world food prices.

The British charity Oxfam, which conducted a provisional assessment of conditions in remote Daykondi, Afghanistan, appealed for international assistance before winter sets in, warning, "Time is running out to avert a humanitarian crisis." The first winter snows are expected next month.

That assessment is echoed by villagers across the broader region, including in Bamian Province. "In all these 30 years of war, we have not had it as bad as this," a farmer in Yakowlang told the Times.

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