
Pakistan. Msgr. Arshad (President Bishops' Conference): "We are responding to immediate challenges, but the post-flood emergency will be worse"

Devastating flooding overwhelms Pakistan. SIR interviewed the President of Pakistan's Catholic Bishops' Conference Monsignor **Joseph Arshad**, Bishop of Islamabad-Rawalpindi. **How is the situation right now?** It's a dramatic situation with relentless intense rainfall. Several districts are facing a state of emergency, eighty districts have been virtually devastated. It's the highest rainfall in at least three decades, massive downpours have caused devastating floods and damage to people and property. The death toll is tragic: over one thousand people were killed by the floods, with approximately 2000 wounded. More than 300 children and 200 women have died. One million houses have been destroyed. More than 80,000 hectares of farmland have been ravaged and more than 3,400 kilometres of roads and 149 bridges washed away. **How is the population coping and what are the greatest difficulties?** The two most heavily affected provinces are Belochistan and Sindh. The northern areas, the mountains, have also been devastated. The city of Karachi was also badly hit. The homes of the poor were knocked down like twigs. **How is the Pakistan Bishops' Conference organising itself?** The first emergency is helping the families. We are working closely with national Caritas to coordinate relief efforts to all the affected areas. We have also launched a fundraising campaign in all dioceses to support those affected by the floods, in families and homes. All the aid is coordinated through Caritas. We now need help to respond to immediate challenges, but the post-flood crisis will be the real emergency. Diseases, poverty and providing assistance to people who have nothing left. We are organising ourselves to face the present situation, and more importantly to meet the post-flood challenge, which is bound to be worse. Over 30 million people have been affected by this climate catastrophe. **Children are among the hardest hit** This is sadly true. Children are among the hardest hit, first of all because they are deprived of their parents and because their future will be severely impacted. Returning to school will also be problematic. Many buildings have been destroyed and just as many damaged. Pakistan has a large percentage of young people and children, and when a family is affected, the highest number of victims are among the children. I think that at least seven million men, women, old people and children are currently in urgent need of health care and food. A catastrophic situation. As I mentioned earlier, Pakistan's agriculture has also been devastated. Crops have been destroyed, and this undermines and threatens the future of people, of families. No area of society has been spared. **How can we help from here?** First of all, our situation should be remembered and not forgotten, and then, if possible, donate some money to Caritas so that we may help to recover - step by step - from this critical situation.

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