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**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

Israel – Wildfires

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2011

December 3, 2010

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- On December 2, at approximately 1200 hours local time, a wildfire began in Israel’s Carmel Forest near Usfiya village. Authorities continue to investigate the source of the fire, which may have begun in an illegal landfill in northern Israel. By the evening of December 3, the wildfire had killed 42 people, burned 8,600 acres, and resulted in the evacuation of 17,000 people from 14 different communities.
- According to international media, the Carmel fire is moving northward from Haifa University toward the Haifa city neighborhood of Denya. Authorities continue to evacuate populations at risk.
- On December 3, U.S. Ambassador James B. Cunningham declared a disaster due to the effects of the wildfire. In response, USAID/OFDA is procuring and transporting 45 metric tons (MT) of aerial application fire retardant and 3,000 gallons of structural protection foam to support fire suppression efforts.
- USAID is the lead U.S. Government (USG) agency for coordinating disaster response and has stood up an interagency task force to respond to the Israel wildfires. USAID is deploying a Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART), including fire management experts from the U.S. Forest Service, to assist local authorities with containing the wildfire. USAID has also activated a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) to support the DART.
- The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is deploying three U.S. Air Force Reserve C-130 aircraft to Israel to conduct fire suppression operations in support of the Government of Israel (GoI). DoD is also deploying two U.S. C-130 aircraft from Ramstein Air Base in Germany, carrying a total of 20 tons of fire retardant to help authorities combat the wildfires.
- USAID staff based in Budapest, Hungary, and Washington, D.C. continue to monitor the situation in coordination with the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, USAID/West Bank/Gaza, DoD, and other interagency partners.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE	SOURCE	
Population Evacuated	17,000	International Media
Estimated Fatalities	42	International Media
Total Acreage Affected	8,600	International Media

FY 2011 HUMANITARIAN FUNDING PROVIDED TO DATE

USAID/OFDA Assistance¹ for Wildfires.....\$441,820
DoD Assistance for Wildfires.....Forthcoming
Total USG Humanitarian Assistance for Wildfires.....\$441,820

CONTEXT

- During 2010, Israel experienced unseasonably high temperatures and drought, with the driest November on record in over 60 years. This weather, combined with strong winds from the Mediterranean Sea, produced ideal conditions for the rapid spread of flames.
- On the afternoon of December 2, the Israeli Home Front Command (HFC) reported that the country’s supply of fire-suppressant chemicals had nearly expired; as a result, the GoI requested international assistance.

Areas Affected

- As of December 3, international media report that several other smaller wildfires broke out in northern Israel, including fires in Ma’alot Tarshiha city and Kiryat Tivon town. Firefighting forces have contained wildfires near the villages of Usfiya and Nir Etzion; however, firefighters expect that wildfires will be under control by December 10.
- Another wildfire began on December 3 near the Bat Salame moshav, a cooperative agricultural community, near Mount Carmel. Authorities subsequently closed portions of the highway due to heavy smoke. Additional fires were reported in the Nazareth area.

¹ Figure reflects estimated costs as of December 3, 2010

- As of December 3, the wildfires had burned nearly eight square miles of woodland, or approximately one percent of Israel’s forested land.

GoI Response

- On December 2, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) dedicated all available resources, including troops and earth-moving equipment, to assist Israel’s Fire and Rescue Service with containing the fires.
- Under the command of the Northern District Commander of the Home Front, the HFC has deployed Israeli Police crews to affected areas to battle the wildfire. The HFC also dispatched equipment, including four IDF armored bulldozers, to assist in firefighting efforts.

USG Response

- Members of the USAID/DART are currently en route to Israel to assist the GoI in ongoing firefighting efforts. The team will include experienced fire management personnel from the U.S. Forest Service.
- Over the coming days, five U.S. C-130s deployed by DoD will arrive in Israel to support the GoI in containing the fires; three of the C-130s are traveling from the U.S., while two others will travel from Ramstein Air Base in Germany.
- In the coming days, 45 MT of aerial application fire retardant and 3,000 gallons of structural protection foam procured by USAID will arrive in country to support fire suppression efforts. An additional 20 tons of fire retardant provided by DoD will arrive on the C-130s from Ramstein Air Base.

International Response

- The GoI continues to coordinate a response along with international governments and partners. According to Israel’s Prime Minister’s Office, as of the evening of December 3, at least 14 international aircraft had arrived in Israel to support ongoing firefighting efforts, including two airplanes and one helicopter from Cyprus; four airplanes from Greece; two airplanes from Turkey; two airplanes and one helicopter from Russia; and two airplanes from the United Kingdom.
- In the coming days, international aircraft will help Israeli firefighting forces ferry water and carry fire retardant to affected areas. Bulgaria has also dispatched 100 firefighters to assist in the wildfire response efforts.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR ISRAELI WILDFIRES IN FY 2011

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE¹			
GoI	45 MT of Fire-Trol Fire Retardant	Northern Israel	\$72,660
GoI	12 MT of Firefoam Structural Protection Foam	Northern Israel	\$36,000
	Transportation Costs		\$333,160
TOTAL USAID/OFDA			\$441,820
DOD ASSISTANCE			
	Air Support and 20 Tons of Fire Retardant	Northern Israel	Forthcoming
TOTAL DOD			Forthcoming
TOTAL USAID AND DOD HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL IN FY 2011			\$441,820

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. Information on organizations responding to the humanitarian situation in Israel may be available at www.reliefweb.int.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID: www.usaid.gov – Keyword: Donations
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or (703) 276-1914
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID web site at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/