



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC - Civil Strife

Date: February - March, 1979 (FY 79)

Location: Al-Bayda, Quatuba, Dahmt, Marib, Hareeb

No. Dead: Not reported

No. Affected: 72,000 displaced, up to 270,000 affected

Damage: Approximately 200 buildings destroyed; an unknown number were damaged. Widespread looting occurred in vacated homes and buildings

The Disaster

On February 23, 1979, approximately 3,000 soldiers of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) entered the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen, YAR) with tanks and heavy weapons. Initially the South Yemeni force encountered only sporadic resistance by the surprised North Yemen military. However, as YAR forces consolidated a defense, the offensive was checked. Townspeople and villagers in the attack areas defended themselves as best they could against indiscriminate ground bombardment, but most were forced to flee to secure areas. North Yemen officials reported approximately 72,000 displaced persons fleeing to Dhamar, Ibb, Taiz, Swadia, Abbas, Sana, Zabid, and Hodeidah. Among this group were 25,000 South Yemen refugees who had previously settled in North Yemen following the coup in Aden in June 1978.

Following a series of Arab League interventions March 4-6, 1979, a political and military truce was established between the two Yemens. On March 16, 1979, the Chiefs of State of North and South Yemen agreed to a timetable for withdrawal of troops from the YAR to be completed by March 23, 1979.

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Action Taken by the Yemen Arab Republic Government (YARG)

On March 21, 1979, the Chief of the National Permanent Committee for Food and Nutrition (NPCFN), Office of the Prime Minister, appealed for U.S. assistance in providing food, shelter, and other necessities for the victims of the conflict. Initially, three YAR government agencies, NPCFN, the South Yemen Refugee Committee, and the Committee for Displaced Persons were involved in relief activities. Eventually, the Yemeni General Secretary of the Yemen Red Crescent was appointed to act as coordinator/expediter between the government and foreign relief agencies. Bureaucratic difficulties were overcome and relief commodities began to move by truck to the scattered relief centers. YARG provided transportation, security, food, and water valued at an estimated \$1,000,000.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On March 22, 1979, the U.S. Ambassador to North Yemen determined that the situation warranted U.S. assistance for the homeless victims of the conflict. On April 2, 1979, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) made a grant of \$350,000 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for emergency assistance to war victims. CRS had been working with the Government of North Yemen since 1975 and, in March 1979, had been requested by the Prime Minister's Office to counterpart the NPCFN in emergency relief operations. OFDA also made a grant of \$100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Total USG assistance was.....\$450,000

TOTAL \$450,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

Catholic Relief Services - arranged for OFDA and other grants; assisted with coordination and logistical problems in Yemen; facilitated distribution of relief commodities; conducted end-use checks in September and October 1979. Commodities, personnel, and administrative costs totalled \$54,423. This includes \$24,423 transferred from previous CRS refugee projects in Yemen.

TOTAL \$54,423

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

European Economic Community - \$99,220 in cash to CRS.

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International Committee of the Red Cross - \$35,000 in cash for relief commodities.

World Food Program - \$5,000,000 of food.

Governments

Great Britain - \$25,000 in cash.

Italy - \$8,000 in cash.

Voluntary Agencies

Catholic Fund for Overseas Development - \$5,207 in cash to CRS.

Danchurchaid - \$10,000 in cash to CRS.

Lutheran World Federation (Sweden) - \$50,000 in cash to CRS.

Swiss Caritas - \$5,000 in cash to CRS.

TOTAL \$5,237,427

* Please note: the figures for total U.S. voluntary agency and international assistance are an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.