



EUROPEAN COMMISSION – PRESS RELEASE

European Union brings relief to the victims of Hurricane Earl in Belize

Belmopan, 09 August 2016.

In response to Hurricane Earl, which struck Belize on 4 August 2016 causing significant damage across the country, the European Commission provides 50 000 EUR in humanitarian funding to assist the most affected populations.

This EU funding supports the Belize Red Cross in delivering much needed relief, including access to safe water, sanitation services and hygiene promotion, reduction of risks for vector and waterborne diseases, non-food items and livelihood asset replacements for the most vulnerable families.

The humanitarian aid will directly benefit 2 200 persons (440 families), who had their homes damaged and are currently without water or electricity, in areas currently affected by flash floods.

The funding is part of the EU's overall contribution to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Hurricane Earl made landfall in Belize on 4 August, as a category 1 hurricane, with wind gusts of up to 110 km/h causing significant damages to homes and infrastructure, blocking roads and isolating numerous communities with widespread power outages. Schools, markets, airports and ports were closed, and water supplies affected in several parts of the country. Initial assessments indicated that 3 500 people were evacuated to 94 shelters across the country.

Background

The European Union together with its Member States is the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid. Relief assistance is an expression of European solidarity towards people in need around the world. It aims to save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, and safeguard the integrity and human dignity of populations affected by natural disasters and man-made crises. The European Commission through its Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) helps over 120 million victims of conflicts and disasters every year. For more information, please visit [ECHO's website](#).

The European Commission has signed a €3 million humanitarian delegation agreement with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Funds from the DREF are mainly allocated to "small-scale" disasters – those that do not give rise to a formal international appeal.

The Disaster Relief Emergency Fund was established in 1985 and is supported by contributions from donors. Each time a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society needs immediate financial support to respond to a disaster, it can request funds from the DREF. For small-scale disasters, the IFRC allocates grants from the Fund, which can then be replenished by the donors. The delegation agreement between the IFRC and ECHO enables the latter to replenish the DREF for agreed operations (that fit in with its humanitarian mandate) up to a total of €3 million.

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