Letters

Plight of Afghan people must not be forgotten

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EDITOR—We are deeply concerned about the potential humanitarian consequences of war in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world with a life expectancy of only 43 years, and a death rate in those under 5 of 257 per 1000 live births.[1] Drought and conflict in the region and have already generated over four million displaced people. Since the attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon thousands more have left Afghanistan's cities, making the situation even worse. The withdrawal of all international aid, including essential food supplies provided by the World Food Programme, owing to the threat of military action, is most likely to result in famine and increased death rates in the camps for internally displaced people. The human impact, particularly on children, could dwarf even the death toll arising from the terrorist attacks.

We therefore urge the UK government to give priority to protecting the health of the Afghan population to prevent a further humanitarian disaster.

Footnotes

- The authors are writing in a personal capacity.

References

1.United Nations Development Programme.*Human development report 2001: making technologies work for human development*.Oxford: Oxford University Press,2001