

How to avoid famine in wartime

WILLIAM LAMBERS

It was Herbert Hoover who said in 1946, "The inevitable aftermath of war is famine." That spring Hoover led a U.S. effort to avert mass starvation in Europe and Asia following World War II.

We need to do the same this year in Syria, South Sudan and Central African Republic. These three nations have been struck by war and humanitarian crisis. The director of the U.N. World Food Program, Ertharin Cousin, warns, "We must not wait until pictures of skeletal, severely underweight, children document our failure and neglect."

Syria's civil war has left families desperate not only for safety, but also for food and other basic supplies. Save the Children tells how one family, trapped in the basement by explosions, survived by eating just half a piece of bread each over four days.

Children have perished in Syria from malnutrition. (Providence-based Edesia produces Nutributter, used by the World Food Program to treat child malnutrition in Syria.)

Relief agencies face two major obstacles. One is access to areas blocked off by the fighting. The international community must demand safe passage of humanitarian supplies. Until this war is brought to an end the tremendous suffering will continue.

There is another issue too: funding. WFP and other aid groups rely entirely on voluntary donations from the international community. Low donations forced WFP to cut rations for Syrians recently. UNICEF is also facing a huge shortage of funds for Syria.

Muhannad Hadi of WFP warns, "It would be tragic to secure more access in Syria but to then find ourselves in a situation where we do not have the required funds to assist hungry people long under siege. We certainly hope that donors will step up their contributions and new ones will come forward."

Likewise in the Central African Republic, the lack of funding is making relief even more difficult. Since the overthrow of the

country's government by rebels, there has been complete chaos. Armed militias now roam the country. With the destruction has come a complete breakdown of food production and other services. All this in a country that was already in poverty.

WFP and other charities have struggled to move aid on dangerous roads, sometimes being forced into airlifts. However, there is such a lack of funds that relief operations are facing a setback as well.

An increased peacekeeping presence and additional funds are needed to prevent mass starvation in the Central African Republic.

South Sudan erupted last year into fighting between the government and opposition forces. This country, which is actually rich in farmland, is on the brink of famine. Nearly a million people have been displaced, some into remote, hard-to-reach areas. The rainy season makes roads impassable.

Hilde F. Johnson, South Sudan's top U.N. peacekeeping official says, "Famine as it is being defined is likely within five months unless humanitarians . . . get all the food they need into respective locations before the rains start. The clock is ticking and it's a race against time."

Catholic Relief Services was running the Jonglei Food Security Program to maximize the tremendous agricultural potential that exists there. Food is the basis of all societies. The conflict has forced that program now into strictly emergency relief. Another tragedy for the newly independent nation.

The wars in these nations must be ended. But peace cannot be found without humanitarian aid. We need to supply this aid until peace and reconstruction can occur. If aid groups can receive enough funding, we can save war victims in all these countries from starvation. As Hoover said in 1946, "And we cannot fail."

William Lambers is the author of "Ending World Hunger" and "The Road to Peace." He is a blogger for the Huffington Post.



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Folly for U.S. to hand over Internet

BOBBY JINDAL

IBATON ROUGE, La. t was an act later generations will regret: The country that invented the Internet unilaterally decided to give it away — jeopardizing in the process the freedoms of billions of citizens globally.

Mao's famous dictum to the 21st century — for them, power does not come just from the barrel of a gun, but also from pixels on a screen.

The infamous "Great Firewall of China," which blocks many web addresses and websites. Reporters Without Borders even suspects that China has turned

tution. Both concepts have transformed the globe — and for the better. From the online communities that gave birth to the Arab Spring, to the spread of commerce around the world, to the rapid spread of free ideas, the Internet has promoted democracy and freedom throughout the globe. Given