

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM IN YEMEN
ON THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO MAINTAIN AL HUDAYDAH PORT OPEN**

Sana'a, 4 April 2017

For over two years, the humanitarian community has been witness to the suffering inflicted upon the people of Yemen by parties to the conflict as they seek to destabilize the economy and cause social services to collapse.

The unwarranted restrictions on the flow of commercial and humanitarian goods and services into Yemen and subsequently within the country are paralyzing a nation that for far too long has been a victim of war. The ability of people to survive is complicated even further by the limitations imposed on their safe movement to seek assistance inside and outside the country.

We are witnessing food shortages, rising food and fuel prices, disruptions to agricultural production, and plummeting purchasing power, especially brought about by the unevenly distributed salary payments in the public sector for over six months across the country. We face continued and severe access restrictions to specific areas, where we know humanitarian needs are grave. We know that approximately 7 million people in Yemen face the prospects of famine.

The continued military escalation in Yemen, specifically the militarization of large regions on its Western Coast and the associated increase of humanitarian access obstacles and population movement restrictions are of grave concern to the humanitarian community. This is only resulting in more displacement, more institutional collapse, and more suffering.

Al Hudaydah Port is the major lifeline for imports into Yemen. The country has historically been 80 to 90 per cent dependent on imported food, medicines and fuel- all vital for Yemen's survival today. Close to 80 per cent of imported goods flowed through Al Hudaydah Port. Following airstrikes in August 2015, it now operates at reduced capacity.

Even at its current capacity, there is no viable substitute for Al Hudaydah Port- both in terms of location and infrastructure. Any alterations to the commercial and humanitarian imports coming through this port would have grave consequences on the country at a time when it faces a severe food, health, and nutrition crisis. Furthermore, the port is located in a densely populated urban center where thousands of people live and any military campaign in its vicinity, from the ground or air, would have devastating civilian consequences. Associated costs of re-routing imports to Aden Port are prohibitive; even more so for the humanitarian effort given the massive underfunding it faces. Steering the humanitarian response away from Al Hudaydah Port, even temporarily, is inconceivable, particularly in a war torn country where infrastructure and security impede movement.

To help stem the suffering, the Yemen Humanitarian Country Team calls on all warring parties and on those with influence over the parties to ensure the continued functioning of Al Hudaydah Port. Further, it calls for action to rehabilitate Al Hudaydah Port to its full capacity, at once.

The Yemen Humanitarian Country Team also calls on the parties to the conflict to effectively demonstrate a renewed commitment towards peace by allowing the resumption of the required imports of basic life-saving commodities, the unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to people in need and the safe movement of people in search of aid.

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