

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, STEPHEN O'BRIEN
STATEMENT ON YEMEN**

This week sadly marks two years since the terrible escalation of the conflict in Yemen.

Despite international efforts to bring about a comprehensive negotiated political settlement, the sounds of airstrikes, bombs, bullets and artillery are now familiar sounds of daily life. They are too often the sound of another death.

Many thousands of civilians have been killed, including well over 1,400 girls and boys – more than a few of these children left their homes to attend school one morning and never returned. Tens of thousands of Yemeni civilians have been injured.

But, casualty figures belie the magnitude of the tragedy unfolding in Yemen.

Conflict, insecurity, and the cynical tactics of the warring parties have wrecked Yemen's economy, made food increasingly scarce, displaced 3 million people from their homes, and impeded the work of humanitarians – whose only aim is to alleviate suffering and save lives.

Man-made conflict has brought Yemen to the brink of famine. Today nearly 19 million Yemenis – over two-thirds of the population – need humanitarian assistance. Seven million Yemenis are facing starvation.

During my third visit to Yemen only weeks ago, I saw the terrible and terrifying evidence of looming famine. In the hospital ward, the complete stillness of the tiny malnourished child whose eyes focus on nothing. The grim realization that these patients were the fortunate ones who could access a hospital and might survive.

What about all the others – out of sight? Out of mind? That is precisely what we cannot allow to happen. There is still time to avert catastrophe in Yemen.

The UN and partners are already providing life-saving assistance in all of Yemen's 22 governorates. We reach almost 6 million people every month. We can and must do more, but urgent funding is needed in coming weeks – or it will be too late.

The parties to the conflict must also facilitate immediate, timely, and unimpeded humanitarian access. They must also facilitate commercial access, which will be critical to reversing the massive food insecurity and ensuring that people's basic needs can be met.

Most of all, the Yemeni people need the parties to commit to political dialogue, or this man-made crisis will never end. In the meantime, together we can – we must – avert this famine, this human catastrophe.

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