

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND  
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR MARK LOWCOCK**

**Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Yemen - *As delivered***

New York, 18 July 2019

Thank you, Mr. President.

In resolution 2451 of December 2018, the Security Council offered unequivocal support for the humanitarian relief operation in Yemen.

Specifically, you called for: first, respect for international humanitarian law; second, unhindered humanitarian access; and third, more funding for the UN response plan. You also noted the link between ending the conflict and alleviating people's suffering.

Unfortunately, your calls have not been heeded.

As I said last month, conditions for most people in Yemen are getting worse, not better. And if the current trajectory continues, we should all expect they will continue to get worse.

The fighting rages on. Since June, 120,000 more people have fled their homes, bringing total displacement this year to more than 300,000 people – on top, of course, of the millions forced to flee in earlier years.

We have seen renewed conflict in Hudaydah governorate, despite the governorate-wide ceasefire agreed in Stockholm.

Two weeks ago, artillery fire and heavy clashes gripped several neighbourhoods in Hudaydah city, damaging private homes, an abandoned hospital and other civilian sites. One civilian was killed and four injured when shells hit a local mosque. Seven children were injured in a separate shelling incident.

Conflict also flared south of the city. In Al Khawkha district, shelling struck a site hosting displaced families, injuring three children and destroying a water tank. In Al Durayhimi, a civilian was killed by a landmine, and in Tuhayta, sniper fire killed a child.

And in May and June, warplanes carried out at least six air strikes across Hudaydah.

As Martin has just said, hostilities in Hudaydah have now subsided again, and relative calm has returned.

But violence continues elsewhere.

At the end of June, air strikes reportedly hit a private home in Taizz, killing seven family members – including four children. Shelling also struck an aid distribution point in Taizz, killing four civilians and injuring two more.

In Al Dhale'e, we continue to receive reports of indiscriminate shelling affecting front-line villages. And in Al Bayda, clashes in Rada killed one civilian and injured three last week, while shelling in another area injured a civilian and damaged family homes.

There are many other examples from more than 30 active front lines across the country.

Ansar Allah forces have also continued drone and missile attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which have killed and injured civilians, as well as damaged civilian infrastructure. These attacks are reprehensible, and they are universally condemned by the international community.

As Martin said, urgent steps are needed to de-escalate violence. For months, I have called for a nationwide ceasefire – one which would end fighting in Yemen and attacks on neighbouring countries.

Let me turn now to progress on your call for unhindered humanitarian access.

Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities in the north continue to hinder humanitarian assistance in areas they control through bureaucratic impediments and interference. You will hear shortly from David about the difficult decisions this has forced on the World Food Programme.

But the obstacles go far beyond WFP. In April and May, humanitarian agencies reported 375 access incidents across the country, some across Government-controlled areas, but mostly in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. During this time, Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities detained more than 180 trucks containing humanitarian cargo and held them for an average of 36 days before they were released.

Ansar Allah authorities also continue to delay a UN technical assessment of the decaying Safer tanker, which as I have told you many times before, threatens to spill up to 1.1 million barrels of oil into the Red Sea.

The UN assessment team had planned to deploy to the tanker next week, but the necessary permits remain pending with the Ansar Allah authorities. Discussions continue to resolve this as quickly as possible. And I would just like to note that this is additionally frustrating when one recalls that the same authorities wrote to the United Nations early last year requesting assistance with the tanker and promising to facilitate our work.

In Government-controlled areas, Coalition forces continue to impose bureaucratic requirements on humanitarian agencies trying to travel up the west coast from the south. This policy frequently delays assistance for people in these areas.

The Government is also moving to introduce new regulations on commercial fuel imports. Fuel is essential to power generators at hospitals, to pump water and to run sanitation systems. Any mechanism to regulate these imports risks worsening the humanitarian situation.

Let me be clear, Mr. President, although access challenges are pervasive, they are not stopping the world's largest aid operation.

I cannot say the same of the third point in your resolution, which is funding. At this time last year, the humanitarian response plan was 60 per cent funded. Substantial, flexible funding early in the year – mainly from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – allowed the aid operation to scale up across all sectors at a critical time. That unquestionably saved millions of lives.

At the High-Level Pledging Event for this year's humanitarian response plan, which the Secretary-General convened in February, so six months ago, donors pledged \$2.6 billion.

Twenty-seven of the 40 donors who pledged have paid more than 75 per cent of their pledges, and 20 of the donors have paid 100 per cent – and in some cases even more.

But those who made the largest pledges – Yemen's neighbours in the Coalition – have so far paid only a modest proportion of what they promised.

And, as a result, the response plan is currently just 34 per cent funded, compared, as I said, to 60 per cent this time last year.

So what are the consequences of this?

Well, there are not yet major consequences for emergency food aid led by the World Food Programme. As David will detail, even after accounting for suspended programmes in Sana'a, WFP is reaching more than 11 million people, which is more than we have previously reported.

But the situation is different across the rest of the relief operation.

Last month I told you that support to medical facilities was being suspended in some areas. Suspensions are now disrupting services of health facilities that serve 9 million people.

Agencies are starting to suspend some regular vaccination programmes targeting 13 million people, including 200,000 infants.

Work on 30 new feeding centres in areas with the worst levels of hunger has also been halted. Up to 60 existing centres could close in the coming weeks, putting at least 7,000 malnourished children at immediate risk of death.

In Sana'a, a UN-supported treatment plant that purifies water for agriculture has also started to shut down. This means up to 4 million people could soon be eating vegetables irrigated with dirty water, making them more likely to contract cholera.

In the next two months, UN agencies expect to close 21 more key programmes. In August, this could mean, for example, an end to shelter services for more than 800,000 displaced people, as well as an end to reproductive health services available to a million impoverished women.

We already see the impact of these cuts in the fight against cholera.

In 2017, you will recall, more than a million suspected cases of cholera were reported. Many experts called this the world's worst ever cholera epidemic.

Last year, with funding provided under the UN response plan, humanitarian agencies implemented a major country-wide campaign against cholera. The effect was to reduce the number of cases to 380,000 for the whole year.

That of course is still a very high figure – but it is also a huge improvement over 2017. And it was achieved despite substantial further degradation of water, sanitation and health facilities caused by the war.

Those gains have now been lost. So far this year, nearly 500,000 cases of cholera have been reported. We have received reports so far of more than 700 deaths as a result, including more than 200 children.

The death toll will surely grow.

Thank you.