



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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

**REMARKS TO THE MEDIA
ADEN, YEMEN, 27 FEBRUARY 2017**

As delivered

I have come to Aden with the first humanitarian UN flight to lend support to the humanitarians who have been working in this city and in Yemen since the conflict escalated in March 2015, and to express my solidarity with the Yemeni people. Also to meet with the Government of Yemen to discuss the humanitarian situation: how to prevent a possible famine and how to better protect the civilians that are caught in this conflict. This is the second time over the past 15 months that I have come to Yemen to show our solidarity with the people of Yemen and the brave and brilliant aid workers across the humanitarian family.

Since the war began almost two years ago, health facilities report more than 7,500 people killed and more than 40,000 people injured. We know this is an underreporting, however, given the dilapidated state of the health system and health facilities across the country and their inability to accurately report the real numbers. Today, almost 19 million people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance. Seven million people don't know where their next meal is coming from and we now face a serious risk of famine. The international community needs to step up its funding and the parties to the conflict need to continue providing humanitarian access; this also means access to the ports so that the needed imports can enter Yemen.

In Aden and the surrounding governorates, 3.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, two thirds of whom are in desperate need of food.

Yesterday, I met again with President Hadi, the Prime Minister and other senior officials. We discussed the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the suffering of the Yemeni people. I stressed the need for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to allow for unimpeded and immediate full access by humanitarian partners to all of Yemen. Given the urgency of the situation, we also discussed the need to facilitate commercial imports of food, fuel and medicine, through all ports of Yemen, and the resumption of commercial flights to all of Yemen.

Yesterday, I saw with my own eyes the destruction of the war and the impact on the people living in Aden. I saw what is left of the maternity hospital; the ruins left behind by fighting, but also saw that some rehabilitation to the facility has taken place. I was especially pleased to know



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that two babies – a boy and a girl - were born while I was there. They are Yemen's hope and future.

I met with families in the Qateea'a neighborhood affected by the fighting in Aden. I also met with displaced people in the Abdoghanem school, where people who sought refuge from Abyan more than two years ago now live with people recently displaced from the conflict in Taizz Governorate, in squalid conditions. All of these vulnerable people – and all people in need across Yemen - deserve our help, support, and assistance.

In response to the immense humanitarian challenge, the United Nations and its partners are responding across all governorates in Yemen. We welcome the recent return of senior Government of Yemen officials to Aden and look forward to working closely with them on delivering a needs-based response in 2017. Humanitarian partners have been present in Aden and elsewhere with national and international staff throughout the conflict. With over 55 national and international humanitarian organizations working in a coordinated manner, Aden hub has one of the highest numbers of humanitarian organizations working in response to humanitarian needs. Approximately two million persons across the Aden Hub – serving Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Dhalea, Shabwa and Hadramout governorates - were provided with some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016. We are now also reinforcing the hub with more permanent UN staff.

I continue to be impressed by the resourcefulness of the Yemeni people. Even before the conflict escalated in March 2015 people in Yemen faced enormous levels of humanitarian needs stemming from years of poverty, under-development, environmental decline, intermittent conflict, unpunished corruption, weak rule of law, and rampant human rights violations. While their community-level social safety nets were well established and were strong, the past two years of increased conflict have reduced their capacity to withstand the economic collapse and security threats the conflict has brought to their lives.

We are here to help and provide neutral, impartial life-saving assistance to all people in need, regardless of where they are in Yemen. With the collaboration of authorities to provide access as well as the funding provided by the international community, the humanitarian community will continue to support the men, women, and children suffering from the conflict in Yemen.

Lastly, let me stress that there are no military solutions to this conflict. With fighting continuing and international humanitarian and human rights law not respected, it is the ordinary men, women, boys and girls who suffer. The parties to the conflict must come together and find a political solution. Only peace can provide a lasting solution to this unfolding humanitarian crisis.
