

## Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen

## STATEMENT BY THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IN YEMEN, JAMIE McGOLDRICK, WOMEN AND CHILDREN KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES IN SANA'A

## Sana'a, 16 February 2017

I am extremely saddened and appalled by the airstrikes that hit a funeral gathering of mostly women and children in a private residence in the Arhab District of Sana'a Governorate yesterday afternoon. Health authorities confirm six women and a girl killed and at least 15 other women injured; some gravely. Unfortunately, the number of dead could rise as the critically injured struggle to survive.

It is not the first time that a funeral gathering is struck by airstrikes, nor is it the first time that women and children are killed in civilian premises such as hospitals, schools and private homes. The manner in which the parties to the conflict are waging this war is taking an unacceptable toll on the civilian population in Yemen and as illustrated by this most recent tragedy, women and children are paying with their lives.

I am alarmed to see this tragic loss of life further escalate the fighting, with reports of a retaliatory ballistic missile strike into Saudi Arabia's Asir region.

This incident comes at a time of severe hardship and suffering in Yemen where imposed import restrictions are causing food scarcity and price hikes resulting in worsening food insecurity and malnutrition across the country. The economic decline caused by the conflict is leading to the collapse of basic service provision. Sana'a airport remains closed to commercial flights, limiting options for those who need this service to access life-saving medical care and restricting movements in and out of the country.

The people of Yemen have suffered long enough. Peace is the only solution that will help end the suffering in Yemen and I continue to call on all the parties to return to the negotiation table.

Under international humanitarian law, which applies to all parties when waging war, parties to the conflict are responsible to ensure that planning and execution of any military campaign ensures the safety and security of men, women, and children not engaged in combat. Infrastructure that sustains life must also be protected. Damage and destruction to civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water and sanitation stations and other infrastructure that sustains civilians must be avoided.

I remind all parties to the conflict and those that influence and support the parties that violations to international humanitarian law have consequences. Yemen and the world are witnesses to the tactics being employed and to the immense suffering these tactics are causing. Violators will be held to account.

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