

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS
HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR YEMEN, JOHANNES VAN DER KLAUW

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Good morning everybody,

In my capacity as the Humanitarian Coordinator for UN in Yemen, I would like to welcome you to this media briefing and thank you for partnering with the humanitarian community to raise awareness about the humanitarian situation to the public in region and around the world.

I would like to thank Sausan Ghosheh, Head of UNIC, and Rema Jamous-Imseis, Head of ROMENA, for convening this press briefing.

I will focus on four issues today. First, the scale and scope of the humanitarian crisis. Secondly, the underlying and proximate causes of the crisis. Thirdly, our response efforts to date. And fourth, the need for the international community to find a political solution to the conflict.

The ongoing conflict is devastating Yemen. The already desperate humanitarian situation has severely deteriorated over the last seven months. Conflict has spread to 20 out of Yemen's 22 governorates, causing widespread suffering, a breakdown of essential services and forced displacement. We now estimate that 21.2 million people – that is a staggering 82 per cent of the population – require some kind of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs or protect their fundamental rights.

These needs can be categorized in the following four areas:

Protection of Civilians: The conflict has taken a severe toll on civilians' lives and basic rights. Since 26 March, health facilities have reported more than 32,200 casualties – over 5,700 of them killed and 830 are women and children. In the same period, OHCHR has verified 8,875 reports of human rights violations. That is an average of 43 violations every day.

Essential Services: The collapse of basic services in Yemen continues to accelerate. We currently estimate that over 14 million people lack sufficient access to healthcare; 3 million children and pregnant or lactating women require malnutrition treatment or preventive services; and 1.8 million children have been out of school since mid-March. Overall, essential services are rapidly contracting due to the direct impact of the conflict and insufficient resources to pay salaries or maintenance.

Basic Survival: Millions of people in Yemen need assistance to ensure their basic survival. We estimate that over 19 million people lack access to safe water and sanitation; over 14 million people are food

insecure, including 7.6 million who are severely food insecure; and nearly 320,000 children are severely acutely malnourished.

Effects of Displacement: Partners estimate that 2.3 million people have been forced to flee from their homes. An additional 120,000 have fled the country. Most IDPs live with relatives or friends, placing a substantial burden on already vulnerable families. Others live out in the open or have occupied public buildings.

The crisis in Yemen is not new, and before the current escalation in conflict, Yemen faced enormous levels of humanitarian need. In late 2014, we estimated that almost 16 million people, compared to today's 21 million, required some form of humanitarian assistance.

These needs stemmed from years of poverty, under-development, environmental decline, intermittent conflict and weak rule of law. This has squeezed vulnerable communities and negatively affected their coping mechanisms.

The way the conflict is being fought is a more immediate cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. In this conflict, we have seen an almost complete disregard for human life, with indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. There are credible reports of violations by all parties to the conflict of international humanitarian law and international human rights law – some of which may amount to war crimes.

Another cause of the human suffering is the imposed drastic reductions in commercial imports. Given the country's heavy reliance on imports for fuel, food, medicines and other essential commodities, stocks of these in markets are all dangerously low. As a result, water pumping and trucking have stopped in many areas, health facilities have cut services, food prices have increased dramatically and large parts of the country see less than one hour of electricity per day.

To alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, the humanitarian community launched a revised Humanitarian Response Plan in June, which asked for \$1.6 billion to respond to the critical needs of over 11 million people. The plan has received over \$700 million, allowing us to provide essential goods and services, including food, safe water and sanitation, healthcare, protection, shelter, household items and education to millions of people.

This includes the provision of food to 7.8 million people, and the provision of enough medical supplies, which allowed 2.6 million Yemenis to gain access to health care. We also provided water and sanitation services to 3.7 million people and have treated 97,000 severely malnourished children. We need to do more and the UN and humanitarian partners are scaling up our efforts by establishing additional operational hubs across the country, in the most vulnerable areas. This includes Hudaydah, Aden, Sa'ada and Ibb. Much more needs to be done, however, as the needs are fast outpacing the current response.

The crisis in Yemen requires a political solution that can address the root causes of the conflict and people's suffering. The humanitarian response can only deal with the symptoms of the crisis, trying to address the immediate suffering of the population and save lives that are at risk. We seek to do this in accordance with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

We, thus, call on the international community to find a political solution to the conflict, before it is too late and we see even further devastation in Yemen.

We also call on the international community to relax the restrictions on commercial imports, especially fuel, medical supplies and food.

Finally, we call on all parties to the conflict to abide to International Humanitarian Law and meet their obligations in protecting civilians and facilitating the provisions of rapid and unhindered humanitarian access.

For more information, please contact:

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