

Statement by the humanitarian community in Yemen on the complete closure of Yemen's borders

8 November 2017

The humanitarian community in Yemen is greatly alarmed at the decision by the Saudi-led Coalition (SLC) to close all of Yemeni airports, seaports and land crossings which is preventing critical humanitarian aid deliveries and commercial supplies from reaching the country and the movement of aid workers in and out of Yemen.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen is extremely fragile and any disruption in the pipeline of critical supplies such as food, fuel and medicines has the potential to bring millions of people closer to starvation and death.

There are over 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance; seven million of them, are facing famine-like conditions and rely completely on food aid to survive. In six weeks, the food supplies to feed them will be exhausted. Over 2.2 million children are malnourished, of those, 385,000 children suffer from severe malnutrition and require therapeutic treatment to stay alive.

Due to limited funding, humanitarian agencies are only able to target one third of the population (7 million) and some two thirds of the population rely on the commercial supplies which are imported, therefore, the continued availability of commodities in the markets is essential to prevent a deterioration of food insecurity. Any food shortage will result in a further increase of food prices beyond the purchasing power of the average Yemeni. The closure has started to impact the daily life of Yemenis with the price of fuel spiking 60 per cent overnight and the price of cooking gas doubling.

The current stock of vaccines in country will only last one month. If it is not replenished, outbreaks of communicable diseases such as polio and measles are to be expected with fatal consequences, particularly for children under five years of age and those already suffering from malnutrition.

The people of Yemen are already living with the catastrophic consequences of an armed conflict - lasting for over two and a half years - that has destroyed much of its vital infrastructure and brought the provision of basic services to the brink of collapse. Any further shocks to imports of food and fuel may reverse recent success in mitigating the threat of famine and the spread of cholera.

The continued closure of Yemen's borders will only bring additional hardship and deprivation with deadly consequences to an entire population suffering from a conflict that it is not of their own making.

The humanitarian community in Yemen calls for the immediate opening of all air and seaports to ensure food, fuel and medicines can enter the country. We ask the Saudi-led Coalition to facilitate unhindered access of aid workers to people in need, in compliance with international law, by ensuring the resumption of all humanitarian flights.

We reiterate that humanitarian aid is not the solution to Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe. Only a peace process will halt the horrendous suffering of millions of innocent civilians.

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