

**STATEMENT BY THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IN YEMEN,**  
**JAMIE McGOLDRICK,**  
**ON THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT AND THE ONGOING FOOD CRISIS**

**Sana'a, 21 February 2017**

I am deeply concerned with the escalation of conflict and militarization of Yemen's Western Coast. It is coming at a great cost to civilians.

Increased fighting along the Western Coast which is effectively limiting the flow of life-saving commodities, including food staples, into Al Hudaydah Port is aggravating an already terrible humanitarian situation in Yemen. Over 17 million people are currently unable to adequately feed themselves and are frequently forced to skip meals - women and girls eat the least and last. Seven million Yemenis do not know where their next meal will come from and are ever closer to starvation.

For almost two months, conflict has escalated from the ground, air and sea in the Dhubab and Al Mukha areas in Taizz Governorate. Scores of civilians have been either killed or forced to flee from their homes. Airstrikes have destroyed or damaged critical roads and bridges across Al Hudaydah Governorate. Unexploded rockets have also landed inside the Al Hudaydah Port, reducing even further the number of ships and imports. Only a limited number of shipping companies now use the port, with vessels being forced to redirect their shipments, including humanitarian supplies, to Aden. Yet, the Aden Port does not have the required capacity or infrastructure to accommodate Yemen's import demands. Furthermore, the transport of goods from Aden to the rest of the country is not guaranteed given the additional costs, blocked or damaged roads, lack of fuel, and ongoing conflict.

The availability of food in markets and the food pipeline are at imminent risk. We are witnessing food shortages, rising food and fuel prices, disruptions to agricultural production, and plummeting purchasing power, especially brought about by the lack of salary payments in the public sector for over six months. Given that the country is 80-90 per cent dependent on imported food staples; I am compelled to raise the alarm. If left unabated, these factors combined could accelerate the onset of famine.

Humanitarian partners are working hard to prevent the suffering of hundreds of thousands of children from crippling malnutrition, which could stunt a generation if not confronted now. Close to half a million children are prioritized for assistance; a nearly 200 per cent increase since 2014. Yet, despite all the efforts, humanitarians cannot replace a functioning commercial sector.

The inhumanity of using the economy or food as a means to wage war is unacceptable and is against international humanitarian law. I urgently call on all parties to the conflict and on those that have influence over the parties to facilitate the rapid entry of critical life-saving food staples into all Yemeni ports; to refrain from or not contribute to the damage and destruction of critical infrastructure required to transport food staples throughout the country; and to find or support a way to pay public sector salaries so that the needy can purchase what is available.

The best means to prevent famine in Yemen is for weapons to fall silent across the country and for the parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table. The international community must also assume its responsibility and provide the needed funds to enable a timely and principled humanitarian response. The people of Yemen are counting on it.

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