

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

REMARKS TO THE PRESS
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Good afternoon,

I have come to Yemen to see for myself the needs of the Yemeni people. There is no substitute for meeting people and hearing their stories firsthand to understand how the crisis affects each of them and their communities. I have stood in the rubble of damaged homes, talked to people, young and old, women and men, whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered or destroyed in a moment.

Aden has been devastated by over three months of intense violence and conflict. Hostilities on the ground, indiscriminate shelling of neighbourhoods and airstrikes have destroyed critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and water treatment plants. Even a kindergarten was attacked, killing eleven people.

Over 200,000 people in Aden have been forced to flee from their homes in search of safety, security, and basic services. Over 800,000 people in Aden – the total population of the Governorate - are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance like health services, water and sanitation, food or emergency shelter.

Getting out and about talking to Aden's people, driving through the city and witnessing the destruction, I am utterly appalled by the lack of protection of civilians by all parties. Sadly, as in all conflicts and in the whole of Yemen, the civilians bear the brunt of violence. All parties to the conflict must abide by their responsibilities to protect civilians, under international humanitarian and human rights laws - I call on them to do so. What we need is peace. The dialogue of weapons needs to be replaced by the dialogue of words. There is no military solution to this conflict.

At Inma school, where hundreds of internally displaced families are living, having fled the violence, elderly Mohammed and his wife, nearly in tears, bravely told me how they had been forced out of their home of decades. It was burnt to the ground in the fighting between warring parties. And the children all need water and food.

The local Governor needs more support to help restore supplies of these of these basic services – I will follow up with him how we can help. In Al Mansura district I was stand-

ing amidst rubble and burnt out tanks. Electricity needs to be re-established, mines need to be cleared and jobs created. We need to listen to society, to women, children, girls and boys.

I met with the UN colleagues and NGO aid workers today who have stayed in Aden throughout the conflict. I express my highest admiration of their work and dedication in saving lives during these last four months. The United Nations and humanitarian partners work relentlessly on providing assistance to people in need, not only in Aden, but throughout the country, according to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Almost 7 million people have received some form of assistance from April to July in the whole country. In Aden, over 280,000 people have had access to quality health care services; nearly 240,000 people have received emergency food assistance and over 16,000 people emergency shelter. Fuel has been provided to the local water corporation, enabling the resumption of services in the city and water trucks continue to transport water into neighbourhoods every day. Humanitarian partners are currently working on programmes, to ensure that pupils can sit their end of year exams and go back to safe schools.

However, the scaling up of assistance and the full-fledged return of all our staff to Aden is made extremely difficult by the destruction and looting of the UN premises and assets. We cannot assist the people in Aden if we do not have offices, vehicles and the knowledge that our staff can work in safety and security. I call on the Government of Yemen, to help us retrieve all assets that are not destroyed.

Furthermore, the overall aid effort in Yemen is hampered by lack of funding. Donors have not responded with the funding that is needed to cover the enormous humanitarian needs in the country. The Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan put forward by the humanitarian community is calling for US\$1.6 billion. We have only received 18 per cent or US\$282 million dollars.

That is why I am here – to take the reality I have seen back to the Council chamber. Donors need to show their solidarity with the Yemeni people and provide us with timely funding to cover the enormous needs in the whole country and notably cities like Aden, that have suffered so badly during the last four months.

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