



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

**STATEMENT ON YEMEN**

I am horrified and extremely disturbed by the news of civilians being killed by air strikes that hit a community hall in Sana'a today. The community hall was hosting thousands of mourners taking part in a funeral ceremony at the time.

Initial reports indicate that over 140 people have been killed and over 500 injured due to this obscene attack. The few hospitals left able to operate continue to receive the dead and injured so the casualty figures may well rise further. Our deepest sympathies go out to the families of those killed and to the injured.

This horrendous and heinous attack displayed an utter disregard for human life. It highlights once again the disproportionate risk for civilians when explosive weapons are used in urban areas. International humanitarian law is very clear: warring parties must protect civilians and distinguish between military and civilian targets.

I call for a swift, transparent and impartial investigation into this incident to ensure accountability. I also call on all parties to protect civilians and stop using explosive weapons or conducting aerial bombardments in civilian-populated places in Yemen. Surely enough is enough.

This attack took place against the backdrop of a desperately worsening humanitarian situation across Yemen, with four out of every five of Yemen's 28 million people in real and immediate need of assistance. I was in Sana'a only last week and saw the relentless heart-breaking situation for myself: medical facilities with no medicines to treat basic conditions; parents struggling to put food in the mouths of their children even once a day; and entire communities terrifyingly affected by conflict and without access to basic services or livelihoods.

Despite the enormous challenges, our focus as humanitarians is resolutely on impartially helping those who find themselves in desperate and dangerous circumstances. I salute the courageous work of national first responders, medical staff and the dedication of all humanitarian workers in Yemen, national and international, both the United Nations and beyond, who are doing everything in their power to save and help rebuild lives, and protect civilians in daily peril. Despite all the dangers and intense impediments to access, significant relief is getting through - and this appalling setback will not deter us from continuing to try to reach all those in need and working tirelessly to raise the funds to make sure we can do so.

But, humanitarian action can never be a substitute for political action. Attacks like today's are inexplicable even in war. I urge all parties to stop the violence, return to political negotiations and bring an end to this devastating conflict once and for all.

New York, 8 October 2016