

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

**Statement to the Security Council on Yemen**

**New York, 28 July 2015**

*As delivered*

Mr. President,

When I last reported on the situation in Yemen in a closed session of the Security Council on my second day in post on 2nd June, I described Yemen as a looming humanitarian catastrophe. By every test, that catastrophe has now loomed, and loomed large. This is an intense disappointment given the extent of our efforts here at the UN and with partners to find ways of alleviating the suffering and the descent into catastrophe.

And the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate rapidly. With 80 per cent of the population of about 26 million people in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance and more than 1,895 civilians killed by fighting since March, the impact of this conflict on civilians is indeed catastrophic. Airstrikes hit a residential complex in Mokha on 24 July, killing at least 73 civilians according to OHCHR. Bodies continue to be pulled out of the rubble, and the final death toll is not known.

A humanitarian pause announced over the weekend has not been respected by any party to the conflict with airstrikes and ground fighting reported in eight governorates. Since the nominal beginning of the unilateral pause announced by Saudi Arabia, set to begin at 23:59 local time last Sunday, coalition airstrikes have been confirmed in Hajjah, Lahj, Sa'ada, and most recently in Sana'a. In Hajjah, an airstrike hit a health centre, killing one person and injuring others. Ground fighting has also been confirmed in Al Dhale'e, Lahj, Marib and Taizz. Rockets were launched from Houthi/pro-Saleh-held areas of Lahj into neighbouring Aden, prompting return fire by Popular Committees.

Mr. President,

Parties to the conflict continue to fail to meet their responsibilities under International Humanitarian and International Human Rights Laws. We continue to witness the death and injury of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including homes, hospitals, schools, roads and bridges. As of 24 July, health facilities report over 4,000 conflict-related deaths and over 19,800 injuries since 26 March. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that 1,895 civilians have been killed, as I said, and 4,182 injured.

Since March, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen has increased by 33 per cent from an already staggering 16 million people to more than 21 million in July. The number of those facing food insecurity has increased from 10.6 to 13 million, an increase of 21 per cent. Some aid agencies are now using the term starvation to describe the situation of those most food insecure. Conditions caused by the fighting have contributed to the spread of preventable diseases such as acute diarrhoea, dengue fever and polio. More than 15.2 million people lack access to basic healthcare, and more than 20 million lack access to safe water.

Commercial imports – which accounted for 90 per cent of Yemen's food and fuel before the conflict – have decreased dramatically. A light, UN-led inspections mechanism enabling the flow of commercial imports to increase has long been proposed and is still urgently needed. Negotiations continue.

The Humanitarian Coordinator visited Aden this week, where he witnessed first-hand the scale of the destruction caused. He described the situation as “harrowing”.

Mr. President,

It is against this backdrop that the international community continues to call for a substantial humanitarian pause that is respected by all parties – that is an unconditional freeze in the fighting to allow humanitarian actors to reach more people in need wherever, wherever they are in Yemen and wherever their need arises, with critically-needed assistance.

Mr. President,

Humanitarian partners, with the expectation that the planned pause would take hold, had developed an operational plan to reach an additional 3 million people in the initial 5-day period with vital assistance, including three million people with water and sanitation, 600,000 people with life-saving healthcare, 3.1 million people with food and 2,200 children under five years old with treatment for acute malnutrition. That plan is live and ready to go now – if only we could get a pause to stick.

With ongoing violence making deliveries dangerous, and with key roads and bridges destroyed, humanitarian access is limited. However, partners continue, amazingly and bravely, to deliver assistance to the people in need whenever and wherever possible, often at great risk to themselves. Yesterday, humanitarian agencies including WFP dispatched food for 62,000 people to Al Hudaydah, Abyan, Amran, Al Dhale'e, Lahj and Taizz. In Sa'adah city and the Rahban area, 50,000 people continued to receive water after UNICEF and its partners delivered fuel for the pumping station. In Al Jawf, four mobile clinics provide nutritional health services. In Aden, humanitarian partners have reopened health facilities that serve 360,000 people and began a vaccination campaign for 120,000 children. Brilliant as this is, it is a mere fraction of what is needed, and what could and can be delivered, if the violence and fighting paused, preferably ceased.

Recognising the need to scale up operational presence, the UN is establishing five hubs across the country, and international UN staff began working in Al Hudaydah today, the first time that UN international staff have been based outside the capital since the start of the conflict. We can go where we have access – there are no partial judgments involved.

Mr. President,

Efforts to respond to the overwhelming levels of humanitarian need are woefully under-resourced. The humanitarian appeal for Yemen stands at \$1.6 billion, of which only 15 per cent – \$241 million – has been received. Much has already been spent by UN agencies and their partners advancing their own funds in expectations of the original Saudi pledge of \$274 million being forthcoming. Additional resources are urgently needed - now.

Mr. President,

I wish to inform Council members that I will travel to Yemen in the coming weeks to see for myself the needs of the Yemeni people and the challenges faced in meeting these. This conflict has brought appalling damage on an already suffering people. We must redouble our efforts to secure a pause in the fighting which is adhered to by all parties, to reach all those in need with basic assistance and urgently to give time and space to seek to reach a more durable ceasefire and a political solution.

Thank you.