

Yemen Briefing

Humanitarian Situation

- 24.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance -80% of the population¹; this includes 12 million children, whose lives are a waking nightmare.²
- Women and girls are likely to be disproportionately affected, given Yemen scores worst in the world for women's wellbeing. One million pregnant women are malnourished, and 120,000 women and girls are at risk of violence.³
- Over 4 million are internally displaced⁴
- Yemen is heading toward the biggest famine in modern history, said the World Food Programme Director, David Beasley.
- 16 million people face crisis levels of hunger.⁵
- 5 million are on the brink of famine⁶.
- Nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021⁷.
- 100,000 children under 5 are on the brink of starvation – malnourished to the point where their lives are on the line⁸
- 400,000 children will die from severe, acute malnutrition if they don't get urgent treatment.⁹
- Children are dying of hunger at a rate of one every 75 seconds.¹⁰
- Sir Mark Lowcock, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs told the Security Council said "About 400,000 children under the age of five are severely malnourished across the country. These are the children with distended bellies, emaciated limbs and blank

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-operational-update-18-december-2020>

² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/life-waking-nightmare-12-million-children-yemen>

³ <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-unrelenting-conflict-and-risk-famine>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-operational-update-15-april-2021>

⁵ <https://www.wfp.org/news/yemen-heading-toward-biggest-famine-modern-history-wfp-chief-warns-un-security-council#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAround%20400%2C000%20children%20may%20die,quarter%2C%20a%20child%20is%20dying.>

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/crisis-yemen-worsening-fighting-near-ma-rib-crippling-fuel-shortages-amplify>

⁷ <https://www.wfp.org/news/acute-malnutrition-threatens-half-children-under-five-yemen-2021-un#:~:text=SANA%A%2FADEN%2FROME,do%20not%20receive%20urgent%20treatment.>

⁸ <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2020-press-releases/severe-food-crisis-could-be-death-sentence-for-yemeni-children>

⁹ <https://www.wfp.org/news/acute-malnutrition-threatens-half-children-under-five-yemen-2021-un#:~:text=SANA%A%2FADEN%2FROME,do%20not%20receive%20urgent%20treatment.>

¹⁰ <https://www.wfp.org/news/yemen-heading-toward-biggest-famine-modern-history-wfp-chief-warns-un-security-council#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAround%20400%2C000%20children%20may%20die,quarter%2C%20a%20child%20is%20dying.>

stares - starving to death,” adding that, “across Yemen, more than 16 million people are going hungry, including 5 million who are just one step away from famine.”¹¹

- 5 million people are one step away from succumbing to famine and the diseases that go with it, and 10 million more are right behind them. Famine is not just a food problem, it’s a symptom of a much deeper collapse, as people are starving not because there is no food, but because they cannot afford it.¹²
- Incomes are disappearing, especially salaries for civil servants, who represent a quarter of the population. Paying them would put money in people’s pockets and keep services running.

Cuts in Aid Funding

- The UN Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is currently 43 per cent funded, with US\$1.65 billion having been received out of the total \$3.85 billion requirement.^{13, 14}
- The UN World Food Programme (WFP) needs \$1.9 billion in 2021. Donors have so far only pledged approximately \$937 million, WFP spokesperson in Yemen Annabel Symington said.¹⁵
- U.S. Special Envoy to Yemen Timothy Lenderking told a webinar sponsored by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations that humanitarian programs for Yemen will begin to close unless contributions increase in the next few months.¹⁶

UK Aid Cuts

- At the recent UN pledging conference the UK only pledged £87 million for Yemen. This compares with £230 m in 2018¹⁷. The Middle East Minister has cited UK expenditure to support the economy because of Covid pandemic to justify this massive cut in aid. Yet this relatively small amount is simply lost in accounting errors when compared with the £100 billion used to support jobs during the pandemic.¹⁸
- The Government has cut ODA to 0.5% GDP to a total sum of £10b. The Foreign secretary must explain why urgent humanitarian relief funding for those in near famine conditions is such a tiny proportion of ODA spending.

¹¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086042>

¹² <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/crisis-yemen-worsening-fighting-near-ma-rib-crippling-fuel-shortages-amplify>

¹³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/food-aid-ramps-up-yemen-funding-crisis-persists-2021-06-10/>

¹⁴ <https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-democratic-republic-congo-yemen>

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/food-aid-ramps-up-yemen-funding-crisis-persists-2021-06-10/>

¹⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/aid-programs-yemen-will-begin-closing-without-increased-funding-us-envoy-2021-06-24/>

¹⁷ <https://www.channel4.com/news/uk-government-cuts-aid-to-war-torn-yemen-amid-condemnation-by-campaigners>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52663523>

Houthi Assault on Marib

- Since the beginning of the year the Houthis have conducted a major military offensive on the Oil and Gas region of Marib, where up to 2 million internally displaced people are sheltering.^{19, 20, 21}
- The escalation in hostilities has already led to the displacement of over 13,600 people. Civilians have been targeted in over 70 incidents of armed violence – in March 40 were killed or injured. Ballistic missiles, drones and other projectiles are hammering the town and its outskirts.^{22, 23, 24}
- Oxfam reports that Yemenis in Marib are running out of options as some families have been displaced 3 or 4 times²⁵
- “An assault on the city (of Marib) would put two million civilians at risk, with hundreds of thousands potentially forced to flee – with unimaginable humanitarian consequences,” said U.N aid chief Mark Lowcock.²⁶ “And that will be very dangerous as we see the latest COVID spike”²⁷
- The battle of Marib could potentially tip the balance between the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) and the Houthis. Marib is a key source of economic income thanks to its natural resources.²⁸
- In June a ballistic missile, fired by the Houthis, hit a petrol station causing a fireball which killed at least 21 people, including a 2-year-old girl.^{29, 30}
- An estimated 500,000 people could be displaced if the Houthis take Marib city and Marib Al Wadi.³¹
- “War overshadows everything,” said Martin Griffiths, briefing the Council for the first time in his capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. The offensive in Ma’rib Province and clashes along nearly 50 other front lines have reportedly killed or injured more than 1,200 civilians, with collapsing public services depriving people of clean water, sanitation, education and health care, and cholera and COVID-19 spreading under those conditions.³²

¹⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/4/607933ab4/civilians-risk-escalating-fighting-yemens-marib.html>

²⁰ <https://www.itv.com/news/2021-04-07/yemen-at-tipping-point-as-second-covid-19-wave-hits-war-torn-country-just-weeks-ahead-of-expected-cholera-season>

²¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-56168943>

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/12/yemen-war-mass-displacement-fears-fighting-intensifies-marib>

²³ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/on-the-ground-with-yemeni-soldiers-battling-iran-allied-rebels>

²⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/4/607933ab4/civilians-risk-escalating-fighting-yemens-marib.html>

²⁵ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/blogs/yemenis-marib-are-running-out-options>

²⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-marib-idUSKBN2AG1W1>

²⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1089812>

²⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/conflict-escalation-marib-and-potential-humanitarian-and-economic-impacts-scenario>

²⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-middle-east-yemen-510b270340702d397fda0436a4260b82>

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ-es86ZKR4>

³¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/conflict-escalation-marib-and-potential-humanitarian-and-economic-impacts-scenario>

³² <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/crisis-yemen-worsening-fighting-near-ma-rib-crippling-fuel-shortages-amplify>

Starvation as a Weapon of War

- Mwatana, an independent Yemeni organization which was established in 2007 and advocates for human rights, have documented the impacts that warring party attacks and other conduct have had on their lives of people across Yemen and described dire effects on food sources, water sources and critical civilian infrastructure³³. Mwatana claims these attacks violate International Humanitarian Law and have deprived civilians of objects that are essential to their survival, starving them, in some cases to death.
- The Saudis have bombed fishermen off the waters of Hudaydah destroying their livelihoods and access to food.
- Saudi attacks have destroyed, damaged and/or rendered useless agricultural areas, irrigation works, livestock, foodstuffs, water infrastructure, fishing boats and fishing equipment. Saudi/UAE-led coalition has attacked, destroyed and damaged other critical infrastructure, including food storage sites, oil and gas, roads and bridges, electricity supplies and markets, and health facilities.
- The Houthis have laid 100,000s of landmines. Residents of areas in which landmines had been planted by Ansar Allah (Houthis) said that they had not suffered from starvation or water scarcity before the mines were planted, and their livelihoods were fine, but because of the landmines, they stopped herding, logging, and agriculture, and their water has been cut off. The widespread and indiscriminate use of landmines have injured and killed some shepherds and their livestock, and has instilled fear in the farming population, preventing them from accessing agricultural land.
- The Houthis have imposed restrictions on humanitarian relief operations.
- They have blocked needs assessments and cash assistance by humanitarian agencies. Cash assistance has been an important way in which organizations in Yemen have supported beneficiaries in meeting their various food, water, shelter and health needs.
- Mwatana has documented specific instances in which the Houthis blocked cash payment projects. They perceived the distribution of humanitarian cash payments as limiting their ability to recruit fighters. The Houthis, took advantage of the dire economic situation, including the non-payment of public employee salaries, to recruit fighters (including children) by offering small payments in cash or essential items like food to the families of those they recruited. Humanitarian organizations' cash assistance to such families disincentivizes recruitment.

Saudi/Government of Yemen Blockade of Houthi Controlled Ports

- There are 3 ports in Houthi controlled territory, Hodeidah (the largest), Saleef and the Ras Isa oil export terminal (not used).
- Access to the ports is controlled by the Saudi Navy who maintain a Central Holding Area (CHA) in the Red Sea. Ships are inspected for weapons by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM)³⁴. All cleared vessels are required to sail to the CHA where the Saudis keep them at anchor until they decide to release them.

³³ <https://mwatana.org/en/starvation-makers/>

³⁴ <https://www.vimye.org/>

- Bulk carriers containing food are not significantly impeded. The average holding time in the CHA being a two or three days³⁵.

Fuel Blockade

- In December 2020 the Saudis imposed a fuel blockade on shipping bond for Hodeidah port in Houthi controlled territory. This is having a disastrous impact on fuel supplies for hospitals, aid transportation, water and sanitation and is pushing up food prices.³⁶
- The Saudis and Government of Yemen say that the Houthis were using fuel revenues to buy weapons and had reneged on an agreement to use duties to fund hospital workers and teachers (who have not been paid for years).
- In March the UK UN Ambassador said the following at a meeting of the Security Council. "We call on the Government of Yemen to immediately approve fuel ships to enter northern ports."^{37, 38}. The UK Government is failing to put sufficient pressure on the Saudis, whose naval vessels implement the blockade.
- In addition to the impact on critical infrastructure and facilities - hospitals, sanitation plants, aid transportation etc. - agencies are reporting that the fuel embargo is impacting on their ability to deliver health, and nutrition services³⁹.
- Immense suffering is caused by rising food and water prices, with over 4 million affected. The switch from oil to wood for cooking is causing deforestation in the north.
- The Saudis and Government of Yemen (GoY) argue that the Houthis tax fuel and use port revenues to enable them to buy weapons. However, the fuel embargo is actually counterproductive as the Houthis can access fuel from GoY areas to sell on at greatly inflated prices. The UN report that fuel prices in the unofficial market in the north are now YER 11,500 compared with just YER 560 in Aden⁴⁰. The main overland fuel distribution routes are documented on page 8 of the ACAPS report ⁴¹.

Container Blockade

- Containers are used to ship, essential items like medicine, baby food, and food products such as rice, oil and tinned beans.
- In 2017 the Saudis imposed a ban on importers using containers to ship goods to Hodeidah. In 2016 40,000 containers were discharged, this fell to zero in 2019 and this year only 1,400 have been off-loaded⁴².

³⁵ https://www.vimye.org/doc/SAMonthly/Monthly_Situation_Analysis_July2021.png

³⁶ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/10/middleeast/yemen-famine-saudi-fuel-intl/index.html>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-immediate-need-for-an-end-to-conflict-in-yemen>

³⁸ No Fuel was discharged in January and February and only 4 tankers in March which represented a 73% reduction compared with the 2020 average.

https://www.vimye.org/doc/SAMonthly/Monthly_Situation_Analysis_March2021.png

³⁹ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/yemen/card/1Yj0b73mPF/>

⁴⁰ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/yemen/card/1Yj0b73mPF/>

⁴¹ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20210817_acaps_yah_thematic_report_impacts_of_fuel_supply_dynamics_0.pdf

⁴² https://www.vimye.org/doc/SAMonthly/Monthly_Situation_Analysis_July2021.png

- Since May 2020, the Houthis have blocked 262 containers in Hodeida port belonging to the World Health Organization as well as a large shipment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Covid-19 response.

Saudi Blockade of Sanna Airport

- Five years of restrictions imposed on Yemen's airspace by the Saudi-led coalition is preventing thousands of sick Yemeni civilians from seeking urgent medical treatment outside the country, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and CARE said today. The airport closure is also causing economic losses estimated to be in the billions over the last five years, worsening further an already dire humanitarian situation.⁴³

Saudi Bombing of Populated Areas

- The majority of civilian casualties have been caused by Saudi airstrikes.
- Britain has sold billion pounds worth of weapons to them, including large numbers of aircraft and bombs. The UK trains Saudi fighter pilots and services their aircraft. The US is the largest supplier of weapons to the Saudis.
- According to the UN Human Rights Panel of Experts, the Saudis have been responsible for dreadful violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.⁴⁴
- Saudi airstrikes on civilians have significantly reduced of late, as they concentrate their air campaign on supporting the Yemeni Government Army by attacking Houthi positions in desert areas around Marib

Houthi Attacks on Civilians

- The Houthis have laid hundreds of thousands of land mines which take a dreadful toll on the civilian population.⁴⁵
- They are responsible for indiscriminate shelling including homes, food stores and hospitals and other civilian infrastructure.
- Houthi sniper attacks have killed over 250 children in Tiaz.⁴⁶
- The Houthis use child soldiers, boys and girls.
- The Houthis are actively recruiting boys as young as 15 to fight as child soldiers on the front lines of the conflict in Yemen, said Amnesty International, by the appalling practice which violates international law.

Poor Prospects for a Ceasefire

- In 2020 the Saudis have offered unilateral ceasefires on two occasions, only to be rejected by the Houthis.
- Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, told the UN Security Council that six years on, there is no sense as to when the conflict (in Yemen) might end. However,

⁴³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/thousands-critically-ill-patients-stranded-sana-airport-closure>

⁴⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/final-report-panel-experts-yemen-s202179-enar>

⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOZM5pbefSk>

⁴⁶ <https://youtu.be/xCsgYYuCW1k>

there is a fair plan on the table, frequently discussed by the parties, that favours humanitarian action and a nationwide ceasefire which would pave the way for a political solution.⁴⁷

- The Envoy said the ceasefire plan would see an end to the Saudi blockade with port revenues being used to fund government works salaries. International flights would resume at Sana'a airport.
- The Saudis have accepted this plan, but the Houthis have rejected it, saying that it is old plan the blockade should end anyway on humanitarian grounds.⁴⁸ The Houthis seem intent on taking Marib, before considering joining ceasefire talks.⁴⁹

Expert Analysis on Peace Process

- Peter Salisbury, Senior Analyst for Yemen at the International Crisis Group, suggests that the new UN Yemen Envoy, Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg, should engage with all parties to the conflict to make negotiations more inclusive. Such a move would prevent the Houthis, the Hadi government, and Saudi Arabia from acting as the gatekeepers to the political process and would incentivise intra-Yemeni dealmaking and coalition building⁵⁰.
- Salisbury argues that the US and UK should put pressure the Saudis and Government of Yemen to immediately lift their fuel embargo of Houthi ports. The fuel blockade is causing dire fuel shortages for hospitals, aid transportation, water and sanitation plants, water trucking and is causing a massive escalation in fuel prices leading to large hikes in the price of food.⁵¹
- Helen Lackner, Helen Lackner is a visiting fellow at the European Council for Foreign Relations, suggests that UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (passed in 2015) must be updated because of two major faults: it formally recognises Abdu Rabbo Mansour Hadi as the 'legitimate' president of the country, which restricts the interlocutors with whom the United Nations can engage; and it calls for the Houthis to withdraw to their pre-2014 positions⁵².
- Lackner calls for a more representative anti-Houthi delegation to be the main interlocutors of the Houthis. The EU and the UK, which remains a key Yemen player, should take a lead in providing the political umbrella needed to take this process forward. This should include persuading the US to back this to secure a political pathway.
- With a new resolution, Grundberg should help create negotiating teams that better represent Yemen's main political, military, and social entities – in the end, negotiations must reflect the realities on the ground and involve people with the power to enforce an agreement. It should also include different socio-cultural groups, tribes, other ascribed social groups, and different professional groupings, all under the rubric of 'civil society', with a quota of 30 per cent women for each grouping.

⁴⁷ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14494.doc.htm>

⁴⁸ <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20210324-why-yemen-s-houthis-turned-down-saudi-arabia-s-ceasefire-offer>

⁴⁹ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/on-the-ground-with-yemeni-soldiers-battling-iran-allied-rebels>

⁵⁰ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-19/shattering-yemen>

⁵¹ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/yemen/card/1Yj0b73mPF/>

⁵² <https://ecfr.eu/article/yemens-seven-years-of-war-how-the-new-un-envoy-can-lay-foundations-for-peace/>

UK Government Failings as a Ceasefire Broker

- The Government appears to have taken a backseat in peace brokering efforts, apparently relying completely on the UN Envoy and failing to use its position as ‘pen holder’ on the Security Council and its strong historical influence in the region.
- Why isn’t the Middle East Minister and the UKs Yemen Ambassador at the forefront of efforts to engage directly with the Houthis and Iran? The last Ministerial Meeting with Houthi representatives in Oman was in the Autumn of last year.⁵³
- Oman is regarded as a peace facilitator. When will the Foreign Secretary and ME Minister be meeting with Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to urge him to encourage the Houthis to end their offensive on Marib and agree to ceasefire talks?
- Why isn’t the Foreign Secretary putting pressure on the Saudis to lift their blockade of Hodeidah Port and Sana’s airport anyway. The UK could threaten to suspend arms export licences if they fail to comply. This would call the Houthis ‘bluff’ and enable to Saudis to take the high moral ground regarding the UN ceasefire proposal.

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⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-hails-strongest-ever-uk-gulf-ties-on-first-visit-to-the-region>