

# Yemen

Yemen is facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with over 20.7 million people in need of aid, including 6.8 million at imminent risk of famine.<sup>1</sup> The conflict, which escalated in March 2015, pits the southern-based exiled government under Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi supported by a Saudi-led coalition, against northern Houthi-led forces supported by Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh and armed forces loyal to him. The conflict has had a devastating impact on civilians, both directly from the violence on both sides and from its consequences, including a devastating cholera outbreak.<sup>2</sup>

Hospitals, schools, markets, homes, food stores, water networks and aid agencies have been attacked by airstrikes from the Saudi-led coalition and ground shelling and fighting including by Houthi allied forces since the conflict escalated in March 2015. The UN believe up to 54,000 civilians have been killed or

injured during the war<sup>3</sup> with 60% of casualties being caused by airstrikes in the year to June 2016.<sup>4</sup> Three million Yemenis have lost their livelihoods after being displaced during the violence. Al Qaeda has taken control of territory in the south of the country as government and services have collapsed.

## Key challenges

The conflict has led to the world's largest cholera outbreak for decades with over 400,000 suspected cases<sup>5</sup> in a country where over 14.5 million people are in need of clean water and sanitation. Yemen's economy has collapsed; 1.2 million public workers – including health and water workers – have not received their salaries in ten months and are therefore unable to help people with cholera. Waste is piling up on the streets, adding to the risk of several diseases spreading, with one child under five dying every 10 minutes according to the UN.<sup>6</sup>

Over 90% of Yemen's staple foods are imported. The Saudi-led coalition has imposed an intermittent air and sea blockade on Yemen, regularly denying deliveries of food, medicine and critical fuel supplies to the country, and has threatened to attack its main port of Hodeidah. Houthi forces have similarly imposed sieges on key cities such as Taiz, leaving people eating leaves according to ICRC.<sup>7</sup> Thousands of people have been detained or disappeared by both Saudi-led coalition forces, including UAE ground forces, and Houthi allied forces.

Since the start of the war, the UK government has approved the sale of over £3.3 billion of arms exports to Saudi Arabia, as well as providing



Eight year old girl collects water from the Al-Manjoran IDPs camp in Hajjah / © Moayed Al Shabani/Oxfam

diplomatic support for their operations. There is some evidence to suggest Saudi Arabia may have broken assurances to the UK government not to use certain weapons including cluster munitions. British Aerospace Engineering (BAE Systems) recently refused to confirm whether some of its 6,200 staff in Saudi Arabia are loading bombs on planes for use in Yemen following a job advert for weapons loading technicians.

The UK has failed to table a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire as promised in October 2016, and has repeatedly blocked diplomatic protests and resolutions at the EU

and the UN, including calls for a UN led independent investigatory mission into violations of human rights by all parties.

The UK is currently the third largest humanitarian donor to the crisis, including £139m in 2017/18<sup>8</sup> but this is far less than the more than £1 billion announced this year to help Syrians refugees. Despite being the largest humanitarian crisis in the world today, Yemen is receiving one of the smallest allocations of all countries DFID funds, including other countries facing famine like Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria.<sup>9</sup>

## Recommendations

We urge the UK government to:

- Support a new UN Security Council resolution on Yemen calling for a permanent and immediate ceasefire.
- Suspend both extant and future licensing of UK arm sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen.
- Press for unrestricted access into Yemen so that the private sector and humanitarian organisations can provide food, fuel and medicine for those in need, including reopening Sana' airport to commercial flights and protecting Hodeidah port from attack.
- The UK should significantly increase its aid to amounts comparable with crises of similar size. The UK should be providing funding to restore the functioning of critical Yemeni institutions and their staff including, water, health, and solid waste service providers.

### Case study

#### Providing water to 4,700 people

Fekri is a 40-year-old father of 4 children, living in Al-Jalilah village, in Al-Dhale governorate. Without a sustainable income, he depends on whatever he can earn from working on the market from day to day.

"Life is difficult these days, and we cannot afford all the essential items. We also had to reduce our water consumption because it's very expensive and more than half of our money is spent on water," explained Fekri.

Oxfam supported Fekri and the 4,700 inhabitants of Al-Jalilah village by building a water tank with a pump line to the village to decrease the cost of buying water by 60%.

More than 1,000 families also received hygiene kits and benefited from several other activities implemented by Oxfam. Oxfam has helped over a million people since the start of the war providing water, sanitation, and giving cash transfers for people to buy food.



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