

Yemen: Escalation spells disaster for civilians still reeling from crisis say INGOs

Sana'a, Yemen, January 16, 2024

We, the undersigned 26 aid organisations operating in Yemen, express grave concern over the humanitarian impacts of the recent military escalation in Yemen and the Red Sea. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains one of the largest in the world and escalation will only worsen the situation for vulnerable civilians and hinder the ability of aid organisations to deliver critical services.

We urge all actors to prioritize diplomatic channels over military options to de-escalate the crisis and safeguard the progress of peace efforts in Yemen. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected, and safe, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance must be guaranteed. Within the wider regional context, we also reiterate the call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire in Gaza to save lives and avert further instability across the region.

Nearly nine years of war have left more than 21 million people – over two-thirds of the population – in desperate need of food, water, and lifesaving assistance. Millions of Yemenis face widespread displacement, food insecurity and limited access to basic services.

The impact of the security threat in the Red Sea is already being felt by humanitarian actors as disruption to trade is pushing up prices and causing delays in shipments of lifesaving goods. In addition, following the US/UK strikes on 12 and 13 January 2024, some humanitarian organisations have been forced to suspend operations over safety and security concerns, while others assess their ability to operate.

Further escalation could result in more organizations being forced to halt their operations in areas where there are ongoing hostilities. Impacts to vital infrastructure, including strategic ports, would have major implications for the entry of essential goods into a country heavily dependent on imports. Scarcity and increased costs of basic commodities, such as food and fuel, will only exacerbate the already dire economic crisis, increase reliance on aid and drive protection risks. All actors have a legal obligation to ensure safe, unimpeded humanitarian assistance so that people in need can access aid services.

Despite operating in one of the most challenging environments in the world, humanitarian actors in Yemen remain committed to delivering lifesaving assistance to millions of people. However, our ability to reach the most vulnerable populations is already being impacted by declining global funding cuts and suspensions in food aid which have forced some organisations to significantly scale back their operations.

Political leaders must consider the dire humanitarian implications of military escalation, and refrain from actions that could result in renewed large-scale armed conflict in Yemen. The recent escalation also underscores the risk of a wider regional and international confrontation that could undermine Yemen's fragile peace process and longer-term recovery.

Signed:

- Action contre la Faim (ACF)
- Action for Humanity International
- ADRA Yemen

- CARE
- Caritas Poland
- CIVIC
- Danish Refugee Council
- DirectAid
- FHI 360
- Humanity & Inclusion – Handicap International
- International Rescue Committee
- INTERSOS
- Islamic Relief
- Marie Stopes International Yemen
- MedGlobal
- Muslim Hands
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Polish Humanitarian Action
- Première Urgence Internationale (PUI)
- READ Foundation
- Relief International
- Saferworld
- Save the Children
- Triangle Generation Humanitaire
- Vision Hope International
- ZOA – Yemen