

Security Council Briefing Key points

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Thank you, Mr. President, Honored Council members,

First, I thank you all with special thanks to the German Presidency for this invitation.

Based on my personal experience as a Yemeni citizen living in Sana'a and my professional experience as head of mission of Doctors of the World - MdM since 2017, that allows me to move regularly in areas controlled by both sides of the conflict, I am going to walk you through the reality of civilians in Yemen today. I want to tell you what we experience in Yemen.

We see mothers and children dying because of preventable complications during pregnancy or birth. We see a 22-year-old mother, who struggled to reach a hospital in Aden throughout clashes and roadblocks to give birth and ended up losing her baby and undergoing emergency hysterectomy to save her life.

We see fathers despairing because they cannot afford to get their malnourished children to treatment centers.

We see patients dying from inability to find or afford their chronic disease medicines. Now, families must choose between chronic disease drugs for a loved one and food.

We see children who survived bombings in Hodeidah with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders and specific phobias, that leave them afraid even of the sound of rain. We see a 12-year-old who was shocked after she stumbled upon the dead body of her classmate to escape the bombing of her school in Sana'a.

We see adults with anxiety and depression symptoms because they cannot provide for their families.

We see families torn apart by the war. And I know that two days from now, when we celebrate Eid, many families will not be reunited.

This already insufferable situation has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although accurate data on COVID-19 cases and deaths is not available in Yemen, I can tell you that we see people dying in their homes and in Health Facilities, not only from COVID like symptoms but above all from lack of timely access to basic health care services.

The health system in Yemen, more than any other country in the world, was not ready for the pandemic. More than half of the health facilities are not functioning well or at all because of the war: destruction, lack of supplies, shortage of fuel and lack and irregularity of governmental salaries are some of the few difficulties that we encounter daily.

I would like to pay tribute to the Yemeni health workers. They are not less dedicated to their patients than in any other country. However, today, health workers in Yemen must choose between unpaid work in Health Facilities or paid work outside of Health Facilities. They must choose between caring for their patients and feeding their children: it is not fair, and no health worker should be put in such a position.

Yet health workers are not the only ones who have their back against the wall. It is the case for all public servants, and all Yemenis.

Clashes, bombing, shelling and lack of security are killing men, women and children, and it happened again last week when a bombing killed 11 civilians including women and children in Al Hazm in Al Jawf. But economic deterioration puts a direct threat on the lives of the survivors because food, drugs and safe drinking water are unaffordable for most.

Let me tell you about when we conduct awareness campaigns about Cholera prevention: many men and women express frustration and ask, “how do want us to clean our hands with plenty of water and soap when we struggle to even secure drinking and cooking water?”

Indeed, hundreds of thousands of Yemeni people lost their jobs, salaries, farms, fisheries and access to ports and markets because of the conflict.

They lost any access to a decent income and are running out of options.

The Security Council can and should give options back to Yemen. To this end, I have 4 asks:

1. Stop the war in Yemen

Stopping the war is the only solution for civilians to be again self-reliant instead of being aid-dependent: all the amount of aid in the world will not be enough to address the soaring needs. We are grateful to all governments who announced support for peace and Mr. Griffith's relentless efforts. But they can do more to stop this war.

First, the Security council should push parties to engage faithfully in peace talks.

Second, the Council members should put pressure on countries directly involved in the conflict to stop military operations and to stop weaponizing armed groups in Yemen.

Third, the Council members should put pressure on the many countries, including permanent members of this council, to put an end to their direct and indirect logistical and military support to military operations in Yemen.

At the street level, regular civilians like myself keep wondering if there truly is collective international willingness to end this war because these countries and others more, continue selling weapons in the region and fueling the war. This contradiction does not make any sense for us Yemeni people and that is why we question and strongly demand the international community's honest and principled support to peace.

Now, we are also concerned that the negative impact of COVID-19 on the global economy will boost weapons selling in hope to boost economies. We hope to be mistaken because any economical profits made from selling weapons that might be used in Yemen are literally made over the dead bodies of Yemeni men, women, boys and girls. I hope decision makers picture that before legitimizing any future weapon sales in the region.

Security council members, if you really support peace in Yemen, just stop all contributions to the war.

My second ask is to:

2. Save Yemen's economy

Depreciation of YER and deterioration of the economy are both a direct result of this war and a direct underlying factor for the violence circle to continue.

When people lose their income, they lose hope.

How can this Council save Yemen's economy?

Lift the blockade and any other restrictions on importations and exportation of all commercial goods to/from Yemen.

Repeated fuel crises dimension civilians' ability to survive. The world is watching the long queues of cars in Yemen fuel stations and probably thinks that people can walk instead. In reality, fuel in Yemen is not just about cars. Fuel is equal to water, because water pumps depend on fuel. It is equal to health because hospitals are working on generators, not on unreliable public electricity. Fuel is equal to food because cultivation and transportation of basic goods come at higher cost and become unaffordable for regular civilians.

3. Support safe and unimpeded humanitarian access

I also ask this Council to push all warring parties to respect international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles and support safe and unhindered access of affected population to relief. Frontline humanitarian workers demand to be unconditionally able to reach those in need. To this end, internal impediments and additional bureaucracies on movement of aid goods and personnel's in both North and South must be lifted immediately.

4. Maintain aid funding and do not abandon Yemen

Aid cannot and will not replace peace. However, even though the country is still torn apart by war, facing an unprecedented economic collapse and a global pandemic, the simultaneous decrease of aid funding to Yemen is absolutely unjust to affected population in Yemen!

We did not choose to be dependent on aid, but we are. This is not who we are. Those who visited or worked in Yemen know that the Yemeni people in North and South are a peaceful, decent nation, full of dignity, pride, social solidarity and

generosity. This is not how we want our children to grow up. Growing up hopeless, powerless and just waiting for what the world will give them out of charity is not a future that any kid in the world deserves. We want our lives back; we want an equal chance with other nations on the planet to work, invent and build our country. Nelson Mandela said that “overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life”.

For Yemen, this will never happen until the war stops.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Yemen needs the UN Security Council to lift the blockade, prevent Yemen economy from collapsing and most importantly stop the war instead of stopping the aid.

Thank you.