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PRESS RELEASE

2 YEARS OF CONFLICT IN YEMEN: SIX INTERNATIONAL NGOs SOUND THE ALARM ABOUT ONE OF THE WORLD WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Sunday 26th March 2016 will mark 2 years of the beginning of the armed offensive launched in Yemen by a coalition of countries led by Saudi Arabia. Two years after this conflict started escalating, Yemen faces one of the world worst humanitarian crisis, with around 19 million persons needing humanitarian aid and persisting alerts on potential famine.

Imminent risk of famine

In Yemen, 17 million persons, being 60% of the population, are food-insecure. « 462 000 children under the age of 5 are in life-threatening situations because they suffer from the most severe malnutrition. They were 170 00 in 2014 so there have been an increase of more than 200%! » explains Serge Breyse, Expertise and advocacy director at [Action contre la Faim](#).

Resolution 2216 adopted by the United Nations in April 2015 imposed an arms embargo against the Houthis and their allies, which de facto became an air and sea blockade preventing nearly any import of basic goods, including food. Import restrictions on wheat are today one of the biggest problems of the country and the main threat to food security in a country importing 90% of its food before the conflict. The country is at risk of facing a growing famine situation.

Disregard for the protection of civilians

The 6 NGOs are concerned about the massive and repeated use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas of Yemen. Using explosive weapons in populated areas violates the international humanitarian law but they have been increasingly used in contemporary conflicts in disregard of basic principles of the laws of war.

“The bombings happening every day in Yemen demonstrate a complete lack of respect for the lives of civilians! Every day, when our teams manage to reach the populations, they are confronted with the physical and psychological distress of civilians who are traumatized. This massacre is unbearable and unworthy in this day and age,” says Jean-Pierre Delomier, in charge of Emergency action at [Handicap International](#). People suffer from their wounds but also from the lack of access to healthcare.

At the end of October 2016, more than half of the health facilities (hospitals or health centres) had been damaged by the violence of the confrontation and were not operational any more. Yemen healthcare system has been especially affected by the conflict and is about to collapse. Facilities also suffer from the imposed blockade and the country's current financial crisis. It remains very difficult to get drug and medical equipment supplies and health workers have not been paid for months. *“The war is dragging on and civilians are paying the price. There have been 200 000 suspected cases of cholera and around 100 deaths since last October. Patients are often diagnosed with mental health disorders such as psychoses, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders,”* warns Dr. Jean-François Corty, Director of International Operations of Doctors of the World-Médecins du Monde.

Limited humanitarian access

Two years after the conflict started, access to vulnerable populations remains very limited and is one of the major challenges for humanitarian actors with none of the parties to the conflict supporting aid delivery. Due to the total or partial destruction of many infrastructures (roads, bridges, airports, harbours) transport and movement of humanitarian staff and goods are very limited, and so is access to basic services for Yemenis.

“Access to vulnerable populations tend to get more difficult for humanitarian workers. We call on the international community and the parties to the conflict to intensify their efforts to improve access because it is still inadequate.”
insists Hélène Quéau, Director of Operations of Première Urgence Internationale.

At the end of the conference, the six NGOs call on the international community and all the parties to the conflict to mobilise much more in order to ensure that the obstacles to aid delivery in Yemen are removed as soon as possible given the context of pre-famine. They ask for the blockade which makes food and drug imports impossible to be ended and for the rights of civilian populations to be respected.

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