

# As Yemen conflict rages, 'all too abundantly clear' millions of civilians are the ones losing – UN relief chief

Raising the alarm over the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, the top United Nations relief official on Friday underscored the need for all parties to avoid further military activity around Hudaydah port – the vital lifeline through which food and fuel flows into the war-torn country.

“It is far from clear that the recent intensification of fighting is producing any winners,” Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, told the Security Council on Friday.

“It is, though, abundantly clear, all too abundantly clear, who the losers are: millions of Yemenis civilians, most of them women and children, whose lives are right on the line.”

## **Bleak humanitarian situation**

Across Yemen – which was already among the world’s poorest countries before fighting erupted in 2015 – well over three-quarters of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance; some 18 million people, including women and children are food insecure, eight million of them severely-food insecure; millions of families have are without a source of income, with teachers, health and sanitation workers and public servants not paid any wages in two years.

Challenges are further compounded by wave after wave of cholera outbreaks and fighting that has not only claimed civilian lives, but also severely hampered delivery of life-saving aid.

Despite heavy odds, work of brave humanitarians on the ground and the support of the international donor community had been successful in keeping the situation “stable” and avoiding the “worst loss” of life, said Mr. Lowcock.

## **Aid operation could be overwhelmed**

However, two recent developments are now threatening to “overwhelm the aid operation”, he warned.

“The first is a marked economic deterioration, symptomized by the depreciation of the Yemeni Rial by some 30 per cent in the last month or so,” said Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

We are already seeing pockets of famine-like-conditions ... people are eating leaves because they have no other form of sustenance –  
*UN relief chief*

Because almost all the food consumed in Yemen is imported, that depreciation translates directly into a sharp increase in the price of food, who are food insecure but who are not reached by the aid operation, he explained.

“We are already seeing pockets of famine-like-conditions – including cases where people are eating leaves because they have no other form of sustenance.”

The second development, continued Mr. Lowcock is the intensification of fighting around Hudaydah, choking the vital port which the aid operation and the commercial markets depend on.

### **Heading off an impending catastrophe**

In his briefing, Mr. Lowcock underscored that while humanitarian action can be scaled up, relief organizations “simply cannot look after the needs of all 29 million Yemenis.”

“That is untenable,” he stressed, asking the Security Council for support in “three key areas” to prevent a complete collapse.

The areas, he outlined, are:

Immediate measures to stabilize the economy and support the exchange rate;

Everyone with a stake in the conflict to uphold their obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, facilitate aid access to vulnerable people; and

All parties to find practical solutions to key issues, including ways civilians in need of medical treatment can travel outside the country to receive it.

“And, of course, and finally, the parties need to get around the negotiating table and engage seriously with the efforts of the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy [Martin Griffiths] on a positive path towards peace,” he concluded.

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## **Guterres hails late Viet Nam President as ‘Friend of the United Nations’**

On behalf of United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, his

spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, issued a statement on Friday, expressing the UN chief's sadness over the passing of Viet Nam President Tran Dai Quang.

"He presents his [deepest sympathies](#) to the President's family and to the Government and people of Viet Nam," Mr. Dujarric said.

According to media reports, the 61-year-old died in a military hospital in Hanoi from a "serious illness" despite the efforts of domestic and international doctors.

"A friend of the United Nations and an important promoter of Viet Nam's development, President Quang will be long remembered in his country and beyond," he concluded.

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## [Ferry tragedy takes lives in Tanzania, Guterres offers condolences, support](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued a statement of condolence and solidarity after a passenger ferry capsized on Lake Victoria, in Ukurewe district of Tanzania.

The UN chief "is [saddened](#) by reports that scores of people have died, many others have been injured and dozens are missing," his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, on Friday.

"The Secretary-General extends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania and wishes the injured a speedy recovery," Mr. Dujarric added.

According to media reports, rescue efforts have resumed after being halted overnight, as hundreds are feared to have drowned.

"The United Nations expresses its solidarity with Tanzania during this difficult time and stands ready to support as required," concluded the statement.

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## [Afghanistan: Short-term emergency can](#)

# 'derail' years of progress, warns UN official

Even though Afghans today have better prospects for a semblance of peace than at any time in the past few years, immediate risks facing the country can seriously jeopardize progress and derail aspirations for a peaceful, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, a senior United Nations official warned on Friday.

Speaking to the press at the UN Headquarters, in New York, Toby Lanzer, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan, highlighted major achievements in the country, including economic progress for the third year in a row as well as upcoming parliamentary elections in October and presidential elections in April next year.

However, alongside these Afghanistan also saw the killings of 13 journalists on the job – the highest number in the world, 23 aid workers lost their lives, 37 were badly injured and 74 abducted, he added

“Afghanistan is undergoing a terrible drought, the worst in many, many years and now over 5.5 million people are in in need of emergency relief,” said Mr. Lanzer, noting that in the past few weeks alone, more than a quarter million people have been fleeing their homes, “looking for any way to get by.”

“Winter is on its way, and in Afghanistan, winter bites hard,” he added.

Of particular concern is the serious shortfall in funds for relief work, said Mr. Lanzer, urging the international donor community for immediate resources.

“I am here to ring alarm bells because if we do not engage more on the short-term emergency relief requirements, the development gains that we have achieved over the past years ... could be lost,” he warned.

Earlier this month, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowock, and Filippo Grandi, the High Commissioner for Refugees, visited the country and called for an urgent increase as well as sustained support for the humanitarian response.

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), the 2018 humanitarian [appeal](#) for Afghanistan is only a third funded, with all humanitarian response sectors lacking vital resources.

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## [DR Congo: Amid renewed risk of spread, Ebola virus leaves over 150 children orphaned or unaccompanied](#)

New Ebola virus hotspots in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are threatening progress made in tackling the deadly disease and increasing its risk of spreading, the World Health Organization (WHO) [warned](#) on Friday.

To date, there have been 142 cases of Ebola in the country's north-east, with 97 deaths. According to WHO, the cities of Beni and Butembo, in North Kivu, have become the new hotspots for the disease.

"Significant risks for further spread of the disease remain," WHO Spokesperson Fadela Chaib told reporters in Geneva. "Continued challenges include contacts lost to follow-up, delayed recognition of [the virus] in health centres, poor infection prevention and control in health centres, and reluctance among some cases to be treatment in Ebola treatment centres."

Ebola is endemic in the vast central African country, which has seen 10 disease outbreaks in the last four decades. Overcoming this latest outbreak in the North Kivu region is proving complicated because of mass displacement linked to dozens of armed groups, and other health threats, including polio and cholera.

[According](#) to the [UN Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), the disease has left more than 150 children and adolescents either orphaned or separated from their caregivers. The UN is working to get 112 of the school-aged children back into classrooms.

"Returning to school is essential for orphaned or unaccompanied children," said Dr. Gianfranco Rotigliano, UNICEF Representative in the DRC. "It brings stability, a sense of belonging to the community and hope for the future."

In a bid to help protect communities, UNICEF had [dispatched](#) a team of 11 specialists in community communication, education and psycho-social assistance, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene. The UN agency is also working with anthropologists specializing in local cultural beliefs and practices to help overcome possible concerns.