

Corbyn demands Government acts to end suffering of the Yemeni people

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, has today (Monday) written to Prime Minister Theresa May demanding her Government acts to end the conflict in Yemen.

The letter follows repeated reports from the United Nations (UN) and other agencies about the scale of the “devastation and destruction in Yemen”, with millions of Yemenis at risk of death as aid cannot be delivered.

Jeremy Corbyn argues that the “UK has a crucial role to play” and calls for the UK to end support for the Saudi-led coalition’s conduct in this war. He urges the Government to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and call for an immediate ceasefire through the UN to enable the negotiation of a long-term political peace.

Text of the letter

Dear Prime Minister

In light of continuing reports from the United Nations and others of the devastation and destruction in Yemen, I am writing to express deep concern about your Government’s role in supporting the Saudi-led coalition in prolonging and escalating the humanitarian crisis and impress on the need for you to call for an immediate ceasefire.

At least 10,000 people have been killed since the conflict started in 2014 and 7 million people are in extreme hunger. Food shortages and the cholera outbreak are a direct result of the continuing blockade of Yemen by the US and UK backed Saudi-led coalition.

The Red Cross has confirmed that the cities of Taiz, Saads and Hodeidah have now run out of clean water and sanitation due to the deadly blockade putting 1 million people at risk of death by famine and waterborne diseases.

The head of the World Food Program too warned today that millions of Yemenis are at risk of death as aid deliveries cannot get to those in need.

This weekend’s warnings from multiple UN agencies starkly state the urgent need to lift the Saudi blockade, in order to stop this already catastrophic humanitarian crisis becoming one of the worst combinations of famine and disease since the 1980s, with millions of innocent people, especially children, at risk of death.

The UK has a crucial role to play in that decision, given the Government’s strong support for all Saudi military action to date, its continued authorisation of arms sales for use in the conflict, and its year-long failure to bring forward a UN resolution aimed at halting the conflict.

In August, former International Development Secretary Priti Patel, announced her department was launching 'a new offensive' against Yemen's man-made cholera outbreak. For many, this incoherence in foreign and development policy is beyond belief. It cannot be aid packages from the UK one day, and missiles the next. With this in mind, I urge your Government to suspend the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, pending the outcome of an independent, international UN-led investigation of potential violations of international humanitarian law from both sides of the conflict.

Given your Government's role as 'pen holder' for drafting a fresh UN resolution intended to secure a ceasefire in Yemen, and enabling both the negotiation of a long-term political peace, why has there been a delay in calling for a ceasefire process?

Whilst the immediate priority should be humanitarian assistance to Yemen, it is time the Government takes immediate steps to play its part in ending the suffering of the Yemeni people, ends its support of the Saudi coalition's conduct in the war and take appropriate action to bring the conflict to a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

Given the public interest in these issues, I will be making this letter public.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Corbyn