

Yemen: as cholera surges again, UN and partners double down on vaccination efforts

Following an “important increase” in the number of suspected cholera cases recently in Yemen, a new vaccination campaign is underway in coordination with the government to prevent a third major outbreak, said the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) on Tuesday.

About 540,000 women, children and men who received a first dose of the vaccine in August, in Hudaydah and Ibb governorates, are targeted in this new four-day campaign. More than 3,000 health workers have been trained and mobilized for this effort.

During the latest campaign, close to 387,400 people were vaccinated, covering 72 per cent of those in need of inoculation.

Yemen, considered today by the UN to be facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, has already suffered from the largest cholera outbreaks in recent history, against the backdrop of heavy civil conflict.

According to WHO, since April 2017, there have been more than 1.2 million cases of suspected or confirmed cholera in Yemen, including over 154,500 cases in 2018 alone. More than 2,500 people are reported to have died from the preventable disease. Around 30 per cent of cases involve children under the age of five and all but one of the country’s 23 governorates have been affected.

Conflict in Yemen – already one of the poorest countries in the world before the crisis – escalated in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily at the request of the Yemeni presidency, against a widespread Houthi rebel insurgency. Airstrikes and ground-fighting have become a daily occurrence for millions of civilians. More than 16 million people lack access to basic healthcare and only half of the country’s health facilities are operational.

Independence of agency ‘paramount’, stresses UN nuclear chief in apparent

response to Israel's claim of secret Iran site

After a direct challenge from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to personally and immediately visit what he called a secret atomic warehouse in Iran, the United Nations nuclear energy chief on Tuesday reaffirmed that his agency has conducted all necessary additional visits.

"Evaluations regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities for Iran remain ongoing," UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head, Yukiya Amano said in [a statement](#) from his headquarters in Vienna.

"The Agency continues to evaluate Iran's declarations under the Additional Protocol, and has conducted complementary accesses under the Additional Protocol to all the sites and locations in Iran which it needed to visit," he added, referring to a series of agreements it has with Iran.

The agency chief stressed that "In line with established safeguards practices, all information obtained, including from third parties, is subject to rigorous review and assessed together with other available information to arrive at an independent assessment based on the Agency's own expertise." He said that "the Agency's independence in relation to the implementation of verification activities is of paramount importance."

In a speech to the UN General Assembly last week Mr. Netanyahu displayed photographs taken by Israeli intelligence which he said showed a secret site in the heart of Tehran, Iran's capital, for storing massive amounts of equipment and material for a secret nuclear weapons programme.

"I have a message to the head of the IAEA, Mr. Yukiya Amano," he declared from the Assembly's podium before Heads of State and Government attending the 73rd annual general debate. "I believe he's a good man. I believe he wants to do the right thing.

"Well, Mr. Amano, do the right thing. Go inspect this atomic warehouse, immediately, before the Iranians finish clearing it out."

Mr. Netanyahu, who from the start has opposed the 2015 accord under which Iran agreed to suspend nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions (JCPOA) claimed that Iranian officials last month had already removed 15 kilogrammes of radioactive material from at least 15 "gigantic" shipping containers at the undeclared site, in an attempt "to hide the evidence" of their programme to develop nuclear weapons.

The JCPOA – reached by Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the US and the European Union – sets out [rigorous IAEA mechanisms for monitoring restrictions](#) placed on Iran's nuclear programme, while paving the way for the lifting of UN sanctions against the country.

'Full impact' of Indonesia disaster unclear, as UN teams push into worst-hit areas

"The Government of Indonesia have confirmed that 1,234 people have died following the earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi," Jens Laerke, from the UN humanitarian coordinating office, [OCHA](#), told journalists in Geneva.

"Some 800 people have been seriously injured and nearly 100 people are still missing. It is likely that the casualty figures will increase as more areas become accessible and the Government conducts more assessments."

At a collapsed church in Sigi Biromaru district, to the south of Palu city, rescuers described struggling through thick mud to retrieve the bodies of more than 30 youngsters from a bible study group.

"It took them one-and-a-half hours to carry each of the bodies out to nearby ambulances, having to wade through incredibly deep mud," said Matthew Cochrane, spokesperson for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ([IFRC](#)).

"The sense from the teams all working there...is one of real frustration", he said adding that "there are still large areas of what might be the worst-affected areas that haven't been properly reached, but the teams are pushing, they are doing what they can."

UN agencies responding, access still difficult

UN agencies and partners have already responded to Government calls for assistance, but access is still difficult to coastal and central areas of Sulawesi, where the full scale of the damage is unknown.

As part of the international response, the [World Food Programme](#) confirmed that it has been in close contact with the authorities since last Friday, when the disaster happened.

The situation is difficult, with shortages of fuel, damage to roads, sea infrastructure and airports impacting the work; telecoms are intermittent – *WFP's Herve Verhoosel*

[WFP](#)'s humanitarian warehouse in Subang, Malaysia, is also on "standby" to release emergency supplies, spokesperson Herve Verhoosel said.

"WFP logistics officers have arrived in Sulawesi, with a Government convoy and are advising the Government on logistic operations," he explained. "The

situation is difficult, with shortages of fuel, damage to roads, sea infrastructure and airports impacting the work. The telecoms are intermittent.”

The potential impact on youngsters is particularly concerning, [UN Children’s Fund](#) UNICEF said, with more than 40 per cent of under-fives in Central Sulawesi already stunted from malnutrition.

The fact that only 33 per cent of births are registered in the area is also a potential obstacle to reuniting unaccompanied minors with their families, UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulhierac said.

“In Central Sulawesi we have concerns not only for the safety of children in Palu, but also in the city of Dongala and other communities still cut off from humanitarian aid,” he said, adding that the full impact of the earthquake and tsunami disaster was not yet clear.



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People survey damaged buildings in West Palu, Central Sulawesi, after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Sulawesi on 28 September 2018.

Immediate priorities

Immediate priorities for the Government include evacuating people away from the worst-hit areas, according to the UN migration agency, [IOM](#), but transport remains difficult and roads “perilous”, spokesperson Paul Dillon said.

Earlier on Tuesday, IOM’s Chief of Mission in Indonesia, [Mark Getchell](#), had discussed the situation with the authorities, Mr Dillon added.

Aid could be delivered via a “humanitarian land bridge” from Jakarta to Sulawesi, Mr Dillon said, noting that the idea had been implemented following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, from Jakarta to Aceh and from Medan to Aceh.

Delivering aid to Sulawesi through the port of Palu, continues to be a major challenge, however, the IOM spokesperson explained.

“The port itself has not been damaged (but) the cranes and gantries and the equipment you would use to remove goods from vessels have been badly damaged,” he said, adding that in some case they had been “completely knocked down, and access to the port itself is very difficult.”

Although the priority is on reaching survivors, damage to basic infrastructure and lack of clean water also pose a significant health threat.

Even before the disaster, Dongala and Palu had registered cases of acute diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, said Tarik Jasarevic, spokesperson for the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

“What we may see as always in this kind of situation is additional injuries, in addition to those that have been already reported as a major health problem,” he said. “Obviously a lack of shelter and water and sanitation facilities could lead to diarrhoea outbreaks and other communicable diseases.”

The WHO official noted that an initial assessment by Indonesian officials had indicated that one hospital had suffered damage, while other health centres are being assessed.

In coordination with the Ministry of Health’s Crisis Center, the UN agency is also preparing to offer to deploy registered medical teams, Mr Jasarevic added.



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On 29 September 2018 in Indonesia, a number of cars are piled up after being dragged into the sea by the impact of the Tsunami on Talise Beach, Palu, after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Sulawesi on September 28.

Indonesian Government leading response

UN Resident Coordinator in Indonesia, Anita Nirody, said in a press statement that the response to the earthquake and tsunami was being coordinated by government and national disaster management board, and regional disaster management agency (BPBD), under the overall leadership of the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs.

She added that the Government “has significant experience and capacity to manage natural disasters, but given the scale and complexity of this emergency combined with the response to the recent series of earthquakes in Lombok and the residual needs there, UN agencies and NGOs are working closely with Government ministries to provide all necessary technical support.”

“With so many people having lost all their possessions and with many basic services down, there is also an urgent and immediate need for food, clean water, shelter, medical care and psychosocial support,” said Ms. Nirody.

UN expert denounces killing of more Palestinian protesters, as ‘affront to human rights’

As protests continue at the Gaza border fence against Israeli policies, so does the killing and wounding of Palestinian protesters, including children, by the Israeli security forces, said a UN independent human rights expert on Tuesday. With the death toll rising, the UN Special Rapporteur who monitors the human rights situation in the Palestinian territory, [denounced](#) the violence as an “ongoing affront to human rights and human dignity”.

“The deaths of seven more participants in the Gaza demonstrations, and the wounding of more than 200 others this past Friday, indicates that the Israeli security forces are not heeding the international criticism of their use of lethal fire against Palestinian demonstrators,” said UN Special Rapporteur [Michael Lynk](#) in a statement, explaining that protesters “appear to pose no credible threat to Israeli security forces.”

Two of the Palestinians killed on Friday were boys aged 11 and 14. One Gaza-based human rights group, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, estimates that 163 of the injured demonstrators were shot with live fire.

The demonstrations at the border fence against Israel’s longstanding blockade and the deteriorating living conditions in Gaza – referred to by Palestinians as the “Great March of Return” – started on 30 March. Since then, more than 150 have been killed by the Israeli security forces and more than 10,000

demonstrators have been wounded; over half by live fire, the expert's statement explained. Some are now left with devastating and life-long injuries.

"International human rights law imposes strict obligations on the use of force by law enforcement officials," said Mr. Lynk. "Lethal force against demonstrators is absolutely forbidden unless strictly unavoidable in the case of an imminent threat to life or threat of serious injury," he stressed, insisting that "many of those killed and wounded appear to have presented no such imminent threat".

"The killing and wounding of demonstrators, in the absence of any strictly-measured justification, and within the context of occupation, may amount to willful killing, which is both a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a war crime," he warned. "It is also a serious violation of international human rights law and its protections for the rights to freedom of expression and assembly."

The human rights expert expressed hope that the independent and international [Commission of Inquiry](#), launched in May by the Human Rights Council, will be able to carry out a comprehensive investigation into the deaths and injuries in Gaza over the past six months.

"Accountability is paramount in the global quest to advance human rights and to bring perpetrators to justice in accordance with the rule of law," Mr. Lynk said.

As the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, tensions are rising in the Strip. On Monday, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees ([UNRWA](#)) temporarily [withdrew](#) part of its international staff from Gaza following a "series of worrying security incidents affecting its personnel", including harassment by individuals protesting recent measures resulting from UNRWA's limited funding.

However, the agency continues to carry out its relief operations to the best of its capacity and several international staff, including the head of operations, will remain in Gaza.

[UN chief marks Non-Violence Day, urging world to follow Gandhi's example; 'the greatest soul that ever lived'](#)

On Tuesday, as part of his official visit to India this week, United Nations

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres laid a wreath in honour of Mahatma Gandhi, at the Raj Ghat Memorial, in New Delhi. Describing him as “the greatest soul that ever lived”, the UN chief said that Gandhi’s example “demonstrates that the way to reach objectives, is through non-violence.”

Mr. Guterres called on the world to follow the “enduring vision and wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi” on the [International Day of Non-Violence](#), which falls on 2 October – the birthday of the iconic leader who led India to independence, and inspired civil rights movements across the globe.

As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I can only hope that all those that have political responsibility in the world are able to be worthy of Mahatma Gandhi and to understand that they should reach their objectives through dialogue, through non-violence, through a strong commitment to truth and too the well-being of their peoples.”

In his message for the day, the UN chief said that “at a time of protracted conflicts and complex challenges, Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence remains an inspiration. At the United Nations, a world free of violence – and the resolution of differences through non-violent means – is at the core of our work.”



Giles Clarke

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres (c) pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at the Raj Ghat memorial in New Delhi on 2 October 2018 to mark the beginning of the celebrations of his 150th birthday.

Mr. Guterres recalled Gandhi’s commitment to social justice. with inequality on the rise. He said it was important for a fairer globalization process to take root, based on human dignity, at a time when the world is “striving to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), ensure gender equality and leave no one behind.”

The [Charter](#) of the United Nations, said the Secretary-General, with its call in Chapter VI for the use, “first of all”, of negotiation, mediation, arbitration, judicial settlement and other peaceful ways to address threats to peace, echoes the spirit of Gandhi’s statement that “non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.”

Noting that Gandhi proved that non-violence can change history, Mr. Guterres called on the world to be inspired by Gandhi’s “courage and conviction as we continue our work to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights for all of the peoples of the world.”

The Indian Government has reportedly launched 2 years of celebrations, from October 2018 to 2020, bookending the Mahatma Gandhi’s year since Mahatma Gandhi’s birth on 02 October 2019.