

News story: Penny Mordaunt calls for continued commercial and aid access throughout Yemen

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt in Djibouti with aid destined for Yemen. Picture: Benet Coulber/DFID

All parties to the conflict must continue to allow unhindered commercial and humanitarian access throughout Yemen to avert the risk of mass starvation, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt warned today. Yemen is the largest humanitarian catastrophe in the world and has left over three quarters of the Yemeni population in desperate need of assistance.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt, who visited Saudi Arabia and Djibouti in December to call for access and meet aid workers, said:

I heard about some of the heartbreaking tragedies suffered by Yemenis when I met with refugees and international aid workers last month.

I am pleased restrictions on access have since been eased at the ports of Hodeidah and Saleef, allowing 19 ships to deliver food and critical fuel. This is already saving lives by ensuring hospitals can continue delivering essential medical care, water can be pumped into major cities, grain can continue to be milled into flour and food transported to those most in need.

But the situation in Yemen remains dire and will deteriorate rapidly unless unhindered access is maintained, especially to the north of the country.

With Yemen importing 90% of its food and fuel, it's essential that Hodeidah and Saleef ports remain fully open to help millions of people who are at risk of starving to death. We recognise Saudi Arabia's legitimate security concerns and will continue to provide support to prevent illegal arms smuggling into Yemen – this does not require stopping humanitarian and commercial supplies from reaching those in need.

The UK Government strongly condemns the continued firing of ballistic missiles from Yemen towards Saudi Arabia. We continue to support Saudi Arabia to strengthen efforts to prevent the flow of illegal weapons by providing extra UK support to the UN's Verification and Inspection Mechanism. We are also engaging with Saudi Arabia's plans to develop an operational

humanitarian plan for Yemen.

Since access reopened, 19 ships have been permitted to enter Hodeidah and Saleef ports, unloading 260,000MT of food and over 95,000MT of fuel. It is vital that commercial and humanitarian supplies of food, fuel and medicine are able to reach vulnerable Yemeni people, particularly in the north where 70% of those in need live. The UK is the second-largest humanitarian donor to the UN's Yemen Appeal and third-largest donor overall, and will continue to support millions of Yemenis affected by the conflict.

Notes to Editors

1. On 20 December, the coalition announced it would fully re-open Hodeidah port to vital commercial imports, including fuel. This was announced shortly after the Secretary of State visited Saudi Arabia.
2. The UK's £205 million of support this financial year (2017/18) is providing: enough food for 1.8 million people for at least a month; nutrition support for 1.7 million people; and clean water and sanitation for 1.2 million people. The latest package of UK support, announced by the International Development Secretary in December, will in addition provide enough food for 3.4 million people for at least a month and provide fuel to support the milling of enough wheat to feed a million people for over a year.
3. The UK is providing £1.3m to the UN's Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to facilitate commercial shipping into Yemen's Red Sea ports and provide assurances against weapons smuggling, and we have seconded British experts into UNVIM in Djibouti to assist with the inspections process.