

Cut off by fighting, thousands of Yemenis urgently need aid and protection – UN official says

31 January 2017 – The senior United Nations humanitarian official in Yemen voiced extreme concern today about the safety and well-being of citizens in the south-eastern part of the country, where military operations are cutting off services and causing harm to civilians.

“A halt to the fighting is required to facilitate the delivery of assistance to Al Mokha and enable the free movement of civilians,” said Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, in reference to the port city on the Red Sea coast of the country.

Up to 30,000 people are estimated to be trapped in Mokha, roughly one-third of the population, and in need of immediate protection and relief assistance, Mr. McGoldrick said.

He noted also that scores of civilians have been injured by repeated airstrikes, shelling and sniper attacks in and around Mokha, which has also ground most services, including the main market and the water supply system.

Meanwhile, in Dhubab, also a district of Taiz Governorate, tens of thousands of civilians are being forced to flee their homes to escape the fighting.

Mr. McGoldrick warned that some are using mined roads, and many have already been previously displaced or lost livelihoods in the fighting.

“I call on all parties to the conflict to meet their obligations under the international humanitarian law,” he said, urging all parties to ensure the humanitarian organizations have “rapid, safe and unimpeded access to reach the people in need in the town of Al Mokha and the wider affected region.”

In addition to concerns for civilians, the UN aid official expressed concern about recent damage to roads and bridges connecting the port city of Al Hudaydah with other governorates.

Noting that infrastructure is vital for moving humanitarian and commercial supplies, Mr. McGoldrick said he deplored such actions “as they risk further isolating Yemeni communities and aggravate the already alarming food security situation.”

UN agencies and partners are mobilizing food, water, shelter and medicines for those in need, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

[News story: A New Chapter for Welsh devolution](#)

From:

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A new chapter in Welsh devolution was launched today as the Wales Bill received Royal Assent.

A new chapter in Welsh devolution was launched today (Tuesday January 31st) as the Wales Bill received Royal Assent.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

The Wales Act 2017 delivers what I've always intended – a clearer, stronger and fairer devolution settlement for Wales based on a reserved powers model.

The provisions in this Act will make a real difference to the lives of everyone living in Wales. The powers being devolved to the National Assembly and Welsh Ministers have a real purpose and will enable them to decide the speed limits on Welsh roads; whether fracking should take place in Wales and how new gaming machines should be licensed.

With more powers, comes more responsibility. The new Welsh rates of income tax will make the Welsh Government more accountable to the people of Wales for the money they spend and doubling capital borrowing to £1bn will help the Welsh Government to invest in infrastructure.

This truly marks the coming of age of Welsh devolution. I will be working closely with the National Assembly and the Welsh Government in the coming months on plans to bring the new Welsh devolution settlement into force.

The Wales Act 2017:

- Introduces a new reserved powers model of devolution for Wales. The National Assembly will be able to legislate on anything not reserved to the UK Parliament.
- Devolves powers to the National Assembly and Welsh Government in areas

including consenting for new energy projects, fracking, sewerage, teachers' pay, licensing gaming machines in new premises, speed limits, pedestrian crossings and traffic signs.

- Provides a comprehensive package of water and sewerage devolution.
 - Opens the door for the Welsh Rates of Income Tax to come on stream.
 - Enables the National Assembly to change its name and take control of its own affairs.
 - Devolves control of National Assembly elections and local government elections in Wales.
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[Press release: Record numbers of working people bringing employment disputes](#)

- Since the introduction of Employment Tribunal fees, record numbers have brought forward disputes
- Thousands more to benefit from extended scheme to waive fees for lowest paid
- Government committed to making sure people from all backgrounds can access justice

More than 92,000 people brought forward workplace disputes last year – the highest number since employment tribunal fees were introduced.

A government review, published today (31 January 2017), has found that the introduction of tribunal fees, as well as free mediation services, have dramatically changed how workplace disputes are resolved.

Since fees were introduced in 2013, a record number of people have sought to resolve disputes either through tribunals or conciliation.

Ministers are committed to making sure people from all backgrounds can access justice, and have today published proposals to expand the 'Help with Fees' scheme which waives fees for the lowest paid.

That would see the monthly threshold for full fee remission increase from £1,085 to £1,250 – broadly the equivalent of someone earning the National Living Wage. There are additional allowances for people living as couples and those with children.

Justice Minister Sir Oliver Heald said:

It is right that those who can afford to should contribute to the cost of Employment Tribunals.

Under our reforms, record numbers are bringing forward disputes in tribunals or through the ACAS conciliation service.

Costs should not prevent anyone bringing claims, so we are extending our Help with Fees Scheme and will introduce a Green Paper on further legal support measures.

The Prison and Courts Bill will also bring more people online, making it even simpler and easier to access justice.

Under the extended Help with Fees scheme, more people would not pay a fee and others would contribute less than under current arrangements. The extended scheme would benefit the disabled, women, BAME individuals, and the young, who all feature disproportionately among low income groups.

We have also decided to exempt from fees a small number of proceedings related to payments made from the National Insurance Fund, as in most cases the applicant is unable to conciliate or recover fees.

While many have chosen not to bring employment tribunal claims, the review found nothing to suggest they have been prevented from doing so, and that higher numbers turning to ACAS is a “positive outcome”. It also found:

- in 2015/16 there were more than 92,000 workplace disputes notified to Acas – the highest number since Employment Tribunal fees were introduced
- tribunal users are contributing up to £9 million a year in fee income, in line with expectations

The review found evidence that some have found fees off-putting – even if affordable or if they may have qualified for fee waivers.

Our consultation, launched today alongside the review, seeks to raise awareness of the Help with Fees scheme, and highlight how thousands more would qualify for help.

The government is investing more than £700 million to modernise courts and tribunals, and over £270 million more in the criminal justice system.

Ministers will bring forward further plans to improve legal support in a Green Paper by early 2018, while the Prison and Courts Bill, due to be published shortly, will make it simpler to access justice and enable thousands more people to bring cases online.

Notes to editors

- Fees were introduced for proceedings in the Employment Tribunals and the Employment Appeal Tribunal in July 2013.
- The review has undertaken a detailed, thorough analysis of the evidence. We have concluded that fees have been generally successful in meeting

the original objectives.

- Employment Tribunals are at the forefront of our vision for a modernised, reformed justice system. Specific proposals for employment tribunal reform were recently set out in a consultation, published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 5 December. The government will bring forward our plans in due course.
 - The review into employment tribunal fees has today been published here – <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-introduction-of-fees-in-the-employment-tribunals>.
 - The consultation document, which runs until 14 March 2017, has also been published.
 - For more information call the MOJ press office on 020 3334 3503 or 020 3334 3529.
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[Banks, UN set standards on channelling investments for sustainable development](#)

31 January 2017 – Nearly 20 leading global banks and investors, totalling \$6.6 trillion in assets, have launched a United Nations-backed global framework aimed at channelling the money they manage towards clean, low carbon and inclusive projects.

The Principles for Positive Impact Finance – a first of its kind set of criteria for investments to be considered sustainable – provide financiers and investors with a global framework applicable across their different business lines, including retail and wholesale lending, corporate and investment lending and asset management.

“Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the global action plan to end poverty, combat climate change and protect the environment – is expected to cost \$5 to \$7 trillion every year through 2030,” said the head of the UN Environment Finance Initiative, Eric Usher, in a press release.

The UN Environment Finance Initiative is a partnership between the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the global financial sector created in the wake of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, widely known as the Earth Summit, with a mission to promote sustainable finance. Over 200 financial institutions, including banks, insurers and fund managers, work with UN Environment to understand today’s environmental challenges, why they matter to finance, and how to actively participate in addressing them.

“The Positive Impact Principles are a game changer, which will help to channel the hundreds of trillions of dollars managed by banks and investors towards clean, low carbon and inclusive projects,” Mr. Usher said.

The Principles provide guidance for financiers and investors to analyse, monitor and disclose the social, environmental and economic impacts of the financial products and services they deliver.

“With global challenges such as climate change, population growth and resource scarcity accelerating, there is an increased urgency for the finance sector both to adapt and to help bring about the necessary changes in our economic and business models,” said Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Société Générale, Séverin Cabannes.

“The Principles for Positive Impact Finance provide an ambitious yet practical framework by which we can take the broader angle view we need to meet the deeply complex and interconnected challenges of our time,” he added.

The Principles were developed by the Positive Impact Working Group, a group of UN Environment Finance Initiative banking and investment members, as part of the implementation of the roadmap outlined in the Positive Impact Manifesto released in October 2015.

Currently, the Positive Impact Working Group includes: Australian Ethical, Banco Itaú, BNP Paribas, BMCE Bank of Africa, Caisse des Dépôts Group, Desjardins Group, First Rand, Hermes Investment Management, ING, Mirova, NedBank, Pax World, Piraeus Bank, SEB, Société Générale, Standard Bank, Triodos Bank, Westpac and YES Bank.

[Press release: Smoother, safer M6 journeys from £550,000 Lancashire resurfacing project](#)

From:

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Part of:

A £550,000 Highways England project which includes resurfacing sections of the southbound M6 between Forton Services and Broughton north of Preston, will get underway next week.

The work involves resurfacing across 3 lanes and the hard shoulder between the services south of junction 33 at Galgate and junction 32 at Broughton Interchange with the M55 – providing safer, smoother journeys for drivers.

Highways England project manager Peter Gee said:

This is routine work to tackle wear and tear along the carriageway. To minimise any inconvenience to drivers the carriageway will remain open at all times during the day with 2 lanes running.

During the overnight work, 1 or 2 lanes will be open apart from a couple of overnight carriageway closures when we are resurfacing.

The project, which includes hardening the motorway verge, will start on Monday 6 February and is due to be completed by Saturday 4 March. The resurfacing itself is taking place between Monday 13 February and Sunday 19 February, requiring 2 full overnight closures of the southbound carriageway between junctions 33 and 32 and a diversion using the A6.

The 2 overnight closures of the southbound carriageway from junction 33 to junction 32 will take place between 10pm and 5am on both Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16 February. On these evenings access to the southbound Forton Services will be closed at 5.30pm and no one will be able to leave the services after 8pm. The services along the northbound carriageway will remain open throughout.

A 50 mph speed limit will be in operation throughout the work.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.