

Top UN humanitarian official in Yemen calls for 'humanitarian pause'

4 December 2017 – Amid a sharp escalation of fighting in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, with reports that dozens have been killed and hundreds injured, the top United Nations relief official in the country has urged for an urgent humanitarian pause to allow civilians to seek assistance, aid workers to reach them, and for the wounded to be evacuated.

"The streets of Sana'a have become battlegrounds and people are trapped in their homes, unable to move out in search of safety and medical care and to access basic supplies such as food, fuel and safe water," said Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, in a statement Monday.

He also noted that humanitarians have received "desperate calls" for help by families trapped in the midst of the fighting but added that ambulances and medical teams cannot reach the injured due to ongoing clashes.

There are also reports that some have come under attack and life-saving activities have been impacted as aid workers are unable to move.

"Thus, I call on all parties to the conflict to urgently enable a humanitarian pause on Tuesday, 5 December, between 10.00 AM and 16.00 PM to allow civilians to leave their homes and seek assistance and protection," he added.

Mr. McGoldrick also urged UN Member States with leverage on the parties to the conflict to step up their engagement "for the sake of the protection of the civilian population."

Further in the statement, the senior UN relief official also stressed that deliberate attacks against civilians, humanitarians and health-care personnel, as well as against civilian and medical infrastructure, are clear violations of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

UN rights chief appoints experts to investigate violations and abuses in Yemen

In related news, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Monday appointed members to the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, established by the Human Rights Council in September this year, to monitor and report on the situation in the war-torn country.

In the resolution, the Geneva-based Human Rights Council –the highest intergovernmental forum on human rights within the UN system – requested the experts to carry out a "comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and other appropriate and applicable fields of international law committed by all parties to the conflict [...] and to establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses and, where possible, to identify those responsible."

The members appointed Monday are Kamel Jendoubi (Tunisia), who will serve as chairperson, Charles Garraway (United Kingdom) and Melissa Parke (Australia).

“The group’s creation is an important step toward accountability and ending impunity for the serious violations of human rights committed by all sides in Yemen amid a worsening humanitarian crisis in the country, and ensuring justice and remedy for the victims,” said the UN rights chief, in a [news release](#) announcing the appointments.

According to the release, the experts will submit a comprehensive written report to the High Commissioner by September 2018.

A child’s bicycle lies amid rubble of a destroyed house in Yemen’s capital, Sana’a. (File) Photo: OCHA/Charlotte Cans 12-04-2017_OCHA-Yemen.jpg