

# UK calls for drastic action in Yemen as coronavirus infections reach one million

The UK Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly MP, has expressed his deep concern at the rapidly rising number of coronavirus infections in Yemen amid an ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis.

Infections may have already reached one million, according to UK aid-funded research by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine which projects a worst-case scenario of up to 85,000 deaths.

During a 'virtual visit', involving calls with senior figures from the Yemeni authorities and the UN, Mr Cleverly set out how the UK is supporting the coronavirus response in Yemen and called for drastic action to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

The Minister highlighted the need for further support to the UN, which fell \$1 billion short of its target at the Saudi-hosted pledging conference earlier this month. The UK pledged £160 million at the conference, one of the biggest donations on the day, to support the frontline coronavirus response.

The pledge takes the UK's total commitment to nearly £1 billion since the conflict began in 2014, which has helped to feed millions of Yemenis, as well as provide access to water and sanitation.

After 6 years of conflict and the recent Houthi offensive on Marib, Mr Cleverly stressed to Yemen's leaders that the only way to permanently end the suffering is with a comprehensive political solution.

He urged the parties to swiftly agree to the proposals presented by the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths.

During the visit, Mr Cleverly said:

This visit has allowed me to hear about the devastating impact coronavirus is already having in Yemen, and I was deeply concerned to hear that there have been over a million cases. All parties to the conflict must work with the UN so there is safe access for food and medicine supplies.

The virtual nature of the visit meant I was able to see how UK aid is helping Yemeni people by seeing the inside of a hospital, homes and camps, as well as talking to vulnerable people receiving support.

I am grateful to all of those working to deliver vital life-saving aid to Yemen, which is needed now more than ever as coronavirus

continues to spread across the country. But only a political solution can end the misery and prevent even more loss of life. I urge Yemen's leaders to redouble their efforts and agree to the UN's proposals.

## **Notes to editors**

- The £160 million package, from the UK Government, announced recently will help to tackle the spread of coronavirus in Yemen and is expected to provide over 700,000 medical consultations, train 12,000 healthcare workers to work safely in a coronavirus environment, and provide a much-needed boost to nearly 4,000 health centres to continue providing existing health services.
- The new funding also aims to provide support to at least 300,000 vulnerable people each month to help them buy food and household essentials, treat 40,000 children for malnutrition and provide 1 million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation.
- UK funded modelling by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine predicts that, with few mitigation measures in place, there may already have been over 1 million coronavirus infections in Yemen. In total, the model predicts that there could be up to 10 million people infected with between 62,000 and 85,000 deaths in a worst case scenario.