

UN agency chiefs call for immediate lifting of humanitarian blockade in Yemen

16 November 2017 – With much of Yemen’s air, sea and land entry points closed, heads of three United Nations agencies on Thursday called for immediate lifting of such blockade in the conflict-ravaged southern Arabian country so that lifesaving humanitarian supplies can pass.

“While the Saudi-led military coalition has partially lifted the recent blockade of Yemen, closure of much of the country’s air, sea and land ports is making an already [catastrophic situation](#) far worse,” said a joint statement issued by World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Anthony Lake, and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

“The space and access we need to deliver humanitarian assistance is being choked off, threatening the lives of millions of vulnerable children and families,” the statement added.

Since 2015, Yemen has been in a conflict between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement.

The UN agency chiefs jointly appealed for the coalition to permit entry of lifesaving supplies to Yemen, describing the situation “the worst humanitarian crisis in the world” in which more than 20 million people, including over 11 million children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, at least 14.8 million are without basic healthcare and an outbreak of cholera has resulted in more than 900,000 suspected cases.

“Some 17 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from and 7 million are totally dependent on food assistance. Severe acute malnutrition is threatening the lives of almost 400,000 children. As supplies run low, food prices rise dramatically, putting thousands more at risk,” the statement said.

The statement said that all of the country’s ports “including those in areas held by the opposition” should be reopened without delay, as that is the only way that UN-chartered ships can deliver the vital humanitarian cargo that the population needs to survive.

Flights from the UN Humanitarian Air Service “into and out of Yemen” should be given immediate clearance to resume.

“The clock is ticking and stocks of medical, food and other humanitarian supplies are already running low,” the statement said, warning that the cost of this blockade is being measured in the number of lives that are lost.

“On behalf of all those whose lives are at imminent risk, we reiterate

our appeal to allow humanitarian access in Yemen without further delay,”
it said.