

UN agency chiefs condemn Saudi-coalition led air strike that killed dozens in western Yemen

The UN humanitarian chief, [Mark Lowcock](#), and the head of the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Henrietta Fore, have condemned the deadly air strike in Hudaydah governorate, in western Yemen, that killed at least 26 children and four women on Thursday.

"This is the second time in two weeks that an air strike by the Saudi-led Coalition has resulted in dozens of civilian casualties," [said](#) Mr. Lowcock, noting that "an additional air strike in Al Durayhimi on Thursday resulted in the death of four children".

Yemen's conflict has its roots in uprisings that date back to 2011, but fighting escalated in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily at the request of Yemen's President.

Echoing a recent statement by UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), Mr. Lowcock, who is the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, called for an impartial, independent and prompt investigation into these most recent incidents.

"I am also deeply concerned by the proximity of attacks to humanitarian sites, including health facilities and water and sanitation infrastructure," he stressed, adding that "the UN and its partners are doing all they can to reach people with assistance".

Similar shock was expressed by UNICEF's Executive Director who [stated](#) that she had hoped that the "outrage that followed [the Saada attack](#)" two weeks ago would be "a turning point in the conflict," and that these latest attacks indicate that it was not.

Mr. Lowcock highlighted the need for improved humanitarian access and for conflict-affected civilians to have the ability to voluntarily flee the fighting to access humanitarian assistance too.

Both officials called the parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and those with influence over them – the UN Security Council and the international community – to ensure that "everything possible is done to protect civilians", and to "end this conflict once and for all".

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian operation as [three in four Yemenis are in need of aid](#). In 2018, so far, the UN and its partners have reached more than eight million people with direct life-saving assistance.