

UN and partners to hold conference seeking urgently needed funds to save millions in Yemen from 'horrific' plight

Preparations are being finalized at the UN for a \$4.2 billion [appeal](#) to scale up help to millions of people in [Yemen](#), where years of war have created the world's worst humanitarian emergency.

But the situation remains "horrific" for people everywhere in the war-torn country, according to Jens Laerke, spokesperson from the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA):

"It has really been a horrific year for millions and millions of people in Yemen who are literally balancing on the edge of starvation and indeed, famine. And they need massive amounts of other kinds of aid: in the health sector, water and sanitation, education for their children, and so on and so forth. We are really at a crossroads."

He stressed that while the UN and its humanitarian partners were indeed aware of, but "we need to address the root causes to find a political solution but meanwhile, while all this happens, people are suffering, and we have reached a scale that we have not seen in living memory."

Last year, humanitarian programmes were scaled up to reach eight million people with direct assistance per month, up from 3.5 million in 2017.

In a [briefing](#) to the [Security Council](#) earlier this week, UN emergency relief chief [Mark Lowcock](#) explained that although Hudaydah is calmer than in recent months, the violence has continued elsewhere.

Clashes have even escalated in some front-line areas – particularly in Hajjah, in north-west Yemen, he said, such that about 80 per cent of the population – some 24 million people – need humanitarian assistance and protection.

Of that number, 14.3 million have "acute" needs – 27 per cent higher than last year, OCHA says, and two-thirds of the country's districts are in a "pre-famine" situation.

"Some 20 million people need help securing food, including nearly 10 million who are just a step away from famine," he said. "Nearly 240,000 of those people are right now facing catastrophic levels of hunger."

In addition, almost 20 million people lack access to adequate healthcare, and nearly 18 million don't have enough clean water or access to adequate sanitation.

Led by the governments of Sweden and Switzerland and with UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) in attendance, the Yemen appeal also aims to raise awareness that more than three million people – including two million children – are acutely malnourished.

Some 3.3 million have also been forced from their homes, including 685,000 who have fled fighting along the west coast since June 2018.

“It’s a plan that aims to reach up to 19 million people in the country,” said OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke. “It requests \$4.2 billion, that is the scale of the crisis – it is the largest country appeal that has ever been launched after four years of almost continual conflict...Last year, we received \$2.6 billion which is the equivalent of 83 per cent of what we asked, which is around \$3 billion.”

According to the UN human rights office, OHCHR, the total number of civilian casualties since March 2015 stands at 18,173.

That includes 7,025 killed and 11,148 injured – “not the whole picture”, spokesperson Rupert Colville told journalists in Geneva, since this total only refers to victims that OHCHR staff have been able to independently verify.

“When there’s a major incident we try to get staff there, which is how we are also able to identify in most cases the likely perpetrator,” he said, “but we wouldn’t claim that this is every single case, because there are some places we can’t get to, and of course some casualties may simply not be reported.”

Of those killed in the conflict in the last four years, OHCHR has attributed 4,585 deaths to actions by the Saudi-led international coalition, 1,448 to the Houthi opposition militia and their allies, and 367 to extremists Al Qaeda and ISIL.