



UNITED NATIONS

DONOR BRIEFING SA'ADA

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HIGHLIGHTS

Clashes have escalated in number and intensity over the past days and have spread to 9 of 14 districts in Sa'ada. Increasing numbers of families are fleeing conflict-affected areas. The situation has been declared the sixth war in Sa'ada.

The Governor has announced that there are 17 000 families (119 000 persons) displaced, including the previous caseload in prolonged displacement. No additional information has been provided as to who or where the 119 000 are.

UN and international nongovernmental organizations are coordinating a number of assessment missions to areas of displacement, including: Hajjah, Amran and Al Jawf governorates.

Agencies have begun providing relief assistance to IDPs where access has been granted. In Sa'ada, distribution remains on hold at the request of the authorities due to insecurity. Humanitarian agencies are urging the Government at the central and field level for urgent implementation of relief assistance.

Note of caution: Media reports on Sa'ada are based on unconfirmed secondary information, and should be read as such.

1. Political/security update and situation in town

The sixth war has started. Clashes in the Sa'ada governorate have escalated in number and intensity over the past week, with reports of daily air strikes and shelling over at least 9 of 14 districts. Vehicles carrying war wounded and casualties can be seen rushing to hospitals.

The frontline of the conflict is nearing the main town every day and it is believed that Houthis could be entering the town. Al Anad camp has become a battleground; no IDPs remain. Houthis are bunkering near the headquarters of central security in the main town of Sa'ada, as well as the immigration office, and hand-to-hand combat is reportedly ongoing in both locations (unconfirmed). The military is shelling from the compound (1 km from the UN office).

Fighting has spread to the Harf Sufyan area of Amran, and last week authorities warned all citizens to evacuate the area. Over the past few days there has been intensive fighting and shelling along the main road. The military is reinforcing its presence, and some have suggested that this is due to the Government's desire to reopen the road in order to transport commodities and items into the governorate. The Government continues to distribute leaflets in the town urging locals to stand beside the Government and cooperate in the fight against the Houthis.

The Governor has declared a state of emergency in Sa'ada town. Security measures are being strengthened by the authorities within the town, and checkpoints are restricting movement of staff and civilians; all vehicles are being stopped and searched for any suspects. There is a severe fuel shortage

and the electricity is now entirely cut off. Curfew starts from 8 p.m. each night and few persons venture outside. Mobile phones are blocked although the Internet and landlines are working. On 15 August the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) requested authorities that mobile phones for key staff be unblocked; a follow-up letter was sent on 17 August. Many restaurants are closed due to a shortage of gas cylinders. Local traders in town are drastically increasing food prices, as the main road is blocked and food commodities cannot reach the governorate; certain commodities are reportedly being rationed, for example, traders are selling only one bag of wheat per family.

UN and international nongovernmental organizations have updated the list of staff and dependants in case of an evacuation/relocation. Currently, it is not possible to travel in or out of the governorate by land or air due to heavy fighting and the close proximity of Houthi presence to the airport. The issue of concern for staff security has been raised with high-level government officials by the UNRC on behalf of humanitarian agencies and the Government has assured that staff security is a priority.

2. Population movement

The Governor has announced that there are some 120 000 persons displaced, including the previous caseload in prolonged displacement. However, no additional information has been provided as to who the newly displaced are and where they are located.

According to reports, there could be as many as 35 000 persons newly displaced in and around Sa'ada town. In light of the close proximity of the conflict to the centre of town, agencies are receiving reports that families are fleeing the main town. Smuggling of persons has also begun and people are paying Yemeni Rials 5000 (US\$ 25) per person to be smuggled out from the main town at great risk.

There continues to be an influx to Al Talh camp, although it is unclear how many persons there are or where they are from as the camp continues to be inaccessible to agencies due to insecurity. The 5250 IDPs from Al Anad camp have fled to Al Talh and areas within or the nearby Sa'ada governorate.

There are reports from Dhahian and Majz that all civilians have fled and scattered, including to many areas currently inaccessible to agencies: to the north near the Saudi border (Baqim); to the west of Dhahian also along the Saudi border (Mandaba); and from Dhahian, Majz and Mahather families have moved east towards the outskirts of Dhahian city and towards Sahar district close to Sa'ada town. Others are trying to settle in Al Talh camp.

Families from Malaheet (IDPs and residents) have fled; many have moved south towards Haradh (Hajjah) while others have moved west along the Saudi Border.

Following the declaration from local authorities to evacuate Harf Sufyan last week, it has been reported that families have fled east to Al Jawf and within Amran district, including Amran town; a small number of persons have reportedly arrived in Sa'ada as well. According to authorities and the Yemen Red Crescent, as many as 52 500 persons could be displaced from Harf Sufyan area, of which an estimated 28 000 persons are scattered across nine locations of the Amran governorate. Thus far, the Red Crescent has registered 5250 IDPs in the Khaiwan area, 15 minutes from Harf Sufyan and one of the larger concentrations. In addition, it is estimated that as many as 17 150 persons could still be in Harf Sufyan, unable to flee due to the ongoing military campaign. Other families have fled to Al Jawf.

There are reports of possible refugees crossing to Saudi Arabia from west and north Sa'ada, however, nothing has been confirmed.

A group of IDPs displaced to Sana'a has contacted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) requesting food and non-food items, as well as providing assistance in shelter.

In light of the deteriorating situation, the UN country team agreed on 18 August to increase the planning figure from 100 000 to 150 000 war-affected persons.

Below is a matrix of displacement since the beginning of the war. The figures are in numbers of persons and are unconfirmed.

Camps in main town	Al Anad					1155 (Camp is now relocated—total 5250 IDPs)	1155
	Al Ihsa						Unconfirmed
	Al Sam						Unconfirmed
Al Talh Camp	700						700
In and around main town but not in camps			315			Could be as many as 35 000 new IDPs	35 315
Al-Jawf				4000 unconfirmed			4000
Haradh area		8400					8400
Baqim and Saudi Arabian northern border	As many as 15 000						15 000
Saudi Arabian western border	Unknown	Unknown					Unknown
Sana'a				200			200
Sahar (outside Sa'ada town)	Unknown	Unknown					Unknown
Across Amran				28 000			28 000
Unknown					Unknown		
	15 700	8400	315	32 200	Unknown	36 155	93 870

*For the most part, above figures are not confirmed. The above estimates are likely high.

** In the above table, those areas in white indicate areas where agencies have access; in blue indicates access is currently unclear due to ongoing conflict; and those in yellow are mostly inaccessible by the UN (with the exception of Al Jawf which may be open to international nongovernmental organizations, although confirmation is pending).

**Note: Some movements indicated in the above matrix are not new displacements but rather relocation; for example much of the caseload in Haradh area were beneficiaries in Malaheet and moved south due to conflict.

3. Assessments

Hajjah governorate

A UN assessment team was sent to Hajjah governorate on 14 August to meet with local authorities and assess the situation. Due to the fact that IDPs were scattered along the road and across the area between Haradh and Malaheet, authorities identified an area for IDPs to re-group in order to register them and provide assistance in Al-Mazrak half way between the two towns.

A rapid field assessment of 54 IDP families found that half of the interviewed families are lacking shelter and there is a serious lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Cases of malnutrition and skin rashes were found among children, and diarrhoea is highly prevalent among IDPs. Psychosocial distress among women and children was also a concern.

So far, 1200 households (8400 persons) have approached the registration centre, many of whom were previous UN beneficiaries in Malaheet. Registration and distribution continue as the word spreads to IDPs scattered across the area that assistance is being provided. Prior to the extension of the conflict to Malaheet, UN agencies had been providing regular assistance to families in the town and surroundings since the end of the fifth war; in July, more than 15 000 IDPs received assistance. Many of the families have come to the distribution site still carrying World Food Programme (WFP) ration cards.

Relief assistance is already being provided to families through a school as a distribution centre; more relief is being dispatched. Crowd control issues are being addressed. The Deputy Governor has suggested that a proper camp be established; The Yemeni Red Crescent Society is travelling to the area.

CARE continues to monitor the situation through its staff currently on the ground for ongoing development projects.

Amran governorate

Following denied clearances on 16 and 17 August, a UN fact-finding mission (WFP, UNHCR, WHO) was finally able to travel to Amran city on 18 August to meet authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Yemeni Red Crescent Society and to visit the governorate in order to identify IDP families, assess the situation, and provide follow-up assistance. The team is planning to visit IDP field locations to assess the presence and needs of IDPs as soon as access is granted.

Based on reports, IDPs are living in very difficult conditions as the 3-hour window for evacuation did not allow them time to escape with assets. Families lack food, safe water, shelter, non-food items and health conditions are poor. Agencies are ready to dispatch food as soon as preliminary estimates are received and locations identified. International nongovernmental organizations are also following up on the situation through contacts on the ground and are ready to provide support as required.

Al Jawf governorate

Due to difficulty for both UN and nongovernmental organizations in accessing Al Jawf, a mission has not yet been able to travel to the area. However, UN and nongovernmental organizations have been following up on the situation through staff and contacts currently on the ground.

On 16 August a WHO local surveillance medical officer confirmed the presence of IDPs in Barat Al Enan, Barat Al Marashi and Al Zaher districts. The officer found between 900 and 1100 persons, the vast majority of whom women and children. Some IDPs were residing with relatives in the area, and others in tents. The WHO officer continues to follow up on the situation.

Based on reports from nongovernmental organizations, thousands of people from Sa'ada—not only from Harf Sufyan—have also moved to Al Jawf, particularly to the districts of Barat Al Marash and Barat al-Enan. Rough estimates suggest that already there could be as many as 4000 people Barat Al Enan. It is suspected that almost twice as many could be reaching Barat Al Marashi district. Major needs seem to be food and water.

On 20 August a nongovernmental organization mission plans to travel to the governorate (pending clearance) to further assess the situation along with UN staff and contacts on the ground.

4. Relief assistance

The nongovernmental organizations forum is prepared to provide assistance as able/needed once assessment teams have identified the need, number and locations of IDPs. For the upcoming assessment to Al Jawf, organizations are looking to also bring some assistance.

Food

On 14 August WFP delivered ready-to-eat food, including 5 metric tons (mt) of high-energy biscuits and 5 mt of dates to Haradh area. By 18 August the stock had been distributed to 7000 persons. The same day, full food rations for 10 000 persons totalling 173.4 mt (cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt) were dispatched from Sana'a, along with an additional 5 mt of high-energy biscuits.

The WFP regular food distribution August cycle is scheduled to begin on 19 August in Sa'ada town for as many as 80 000 persons in the town and camps, not including new arrivals. Due to limited funding and the closure of the main road, WFP currently only has enough commodities for half a month's ration for the previous caseload. Alternative routes to the governorate are being assessed in order to dispatch additional commodities as soon as possible (for Baqim, north Sa'ada, as well).

On 16 August WFP 35 mt of high-energy biscuits were airlifted to Sana'a from Dubai. The ready-to-eat food is ready to be dispatched as soon as preliminary findings from the mission teams in Amran and Al Jawf come in. WFP has also purchased additional food items to cover the needs of the increasing caseload.

WFP logistics, ICT, and nutrition technical assistance is arriving in Yemen to further assist.

Shelter and non-food items

In Haradh area, 2100 persons are receiving shelter and non-food items. UNHCR is distributing 100 tents and 300 plastic sheets, 1150 mattresses, and 2100 blankets. Regarding hygiene and protection, 525 kg powdered soap, 4200 soap bars, and 630 sanitary napkins are also being distributed along with 300 kitchen sets. Additional non-food items and shelter stock for 1400 families is en route.

Health

WHO has deployed two mobile health clinics to Haradh/Al Mazrak area to provide: integrated management of childhood illnesses; malaria treatment; treatment for skin diseases; vaccinations; reproductive health care; and referrals. Two diarrhoea kits have also been dispatched to assist 10 000 cases, and additional three kits are in store. WHO is also preparing bednets for dispatch.

WHO has received two trauma kits sufficient for 200 surgical interventions; an additional four trauma kits are in the pipeline.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

UNICEF is delivering 825 silver water filters, 1000 jerry cans (two per family), 500 hygiene kits and 300 000 water purification tablets set to arrive on 20 August in Haradh to cover the needs of 500 families. An additional 500 hygiene kits, 500 silver water filters, 1000 jerry cans and 5 million water purification tablets are being pre-positioned close to Haradh, as needed.

UNICEF will provide technical assistance for logistics, nutrition and water and sanitation to support relief efforts.

5. Challenges to the provision of assistance

Distribution to both the previous caseload and newly displaced continues to be on hold at the direction of the authorities due to insecurity in Sa'ada. Humanitarian agencies at the central and local level are advocating the urgent resumption of activities.

The UNRC sent a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister for Internal Security on 17 August requesting the possibility of localized ceasefires to allow humanitarian workers to distribute assistance and to immediately resume humanitarian interventions. The Deputy Prime Minister recognized that humanitarian needs are increasing and he requested the UN to maintain the current set-up so as to address needs.

All roads to the governorate are blocked and civilian aircraft is not cleared. Humanitarian agencies are running on limited stock of food and medical supplies. The UNRC has raised the concern on behalf of the humanitarian country team to the highest level authorities and the need for a supply corridor.

Moreover, access to IDPs in Al Jawf, as well as outside the main town of Sa'ada (north and west) is extremely limited; Al Talh camp is now also surrounded by clashes and shelling and is likely inaccessible for the time being.