Sana’a, 7 May 2018 – The World Health Organization (WHO) has delivered over 7 tons of various life-saving anti-cancer medicines and chemotherapy medications to the country’s National Oncology Centre in Sana’a, Yemen.

The anti-cancer medicines are essential life-saving drugs that will cover the acute shortages of medicines for cancer patients for one year, thanks to the generous support of the World Bank and Germany.

These were delivered immediately to the National Oncology Centre, located in the heart of Sana’a. Since 2005 more than 60 000 cancer patients from all over Yemen (12% of whom are children) have received treatment at the Centre. While an estimated 30 000 cancer patients are still in dire need of active treatment (i.e. chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormonal treatment or palliative treatment).
The challenges facing the centre are not only confined to shortages of medicines and lack of operational costs. Professional oncologists and other medical staff have left the country due to the ongoing conflict, unpaid health care worker salaries and the deteriorating economic situation have also contributed to the resource drain.

“The health challenges are tremendous. We have managed to bring in this shipment despite logistical constraints and the ongoing conflict that threaten our supplies on a regular basis.” said Dr Nevio Zagaria, WHO Representative to Yemen.

“The crisis prolongs the suffering of the Yemeni people, who are sick and dying from preventable diseases. This is unacceptable. We need to do more to ensure that everyone has access to essential health care.”

**The world’s worst humanitarian crisis**

As the world’s worst humanitarian crisis enters its fourth year, the health situation continues its march towards near collapse. The battle for the people of Yemen is two-fold: they fight for their lives not only against armed conflict but against poor health conditions. Noncommunicable diseases, malnutrition, and preventable diseases kill more people than bullets or bombs.

Noncommunicable diseases represent 39% of the main causes of death and treatment for diseases such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension is available in only 20% of health facilities across Yemen.

Cancer patients in Yemen struggled even prior to the conflict, unable to afford the costly treatment. Only 10 000 patients received some form of cancer treatment in 2017. However, the percentage of full treatment out of these 10 000 patients, increased from 30% to 60% of full treatments. Still, the needs are severe and WHO plans to deliver another shipment of anti-cancer drugs within the first half of 2018.

**Related link**

*Cancer patients in Yemen face slow death as treatment options diminish*

4 February 2018