

Time for UN Security Council to act on Yemen

REPORT

from [Norwegian Refugee Council](#)

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The United Nations Security Council should break its eight-month silence on Yemen by demanding a complete lifting of the blockade and cessation of hostilities, the Norwegian Refugee Council said.

The United Kingdom has proposed a presidential statement on the situation in Yemen which the Security Council will discuss this week. While Security Council resolutions are binding on all member-states, presidential statements are not.

"The Security Council has been shamefully silent for months on Yemen when it has the power to redress the colossal crisis unfolding there through a binding and meaningful resolution," said Suze van Meegen, NRC's Protection and Advocacy Adviser on Yemen. "Another weak presidential statement will have little effect on the ground, if any at all. The worst humanitarian crisis in the world deserves more than just an 'expression of concern'."

As the penholder on Yemen in the Security Council, the UK is in charge of drafting resolutions and statements related to Yemen. NRC called on the UK to either demonstrate that it can lead the council to take meaningful action on Yemen, or hand over the penholder responsibility to another member.

The last time the Security Council issued a statement on Yemen was in a June 2017 when it expressed "grave concerns" about the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict on civilians. Since then, Yemen's crisis has transformed into the largest in the world. 22.2 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance or protection, an increase of more than 4.2 million in less than a year. There have been 927,000 more cases of suspected cholera and 1.6 million more people are on the edge of famine.

The obstruction of commercial imports continues to exacerbate the crisis, NRC said. A recently published report by a UN panel of experts found that the Saudi-led blockade on humanitarian and commercial goods "is essentially using the threat of starvation as a bargaining tool and an instrument of war." The report also found that Ansar Allah authorities

continued to obstruct the distribution of humanitarian assistance and prevented humanitarian access.

"Yemen's crisis is entirely man-made. The spread of cholera and the threat of famine are the results of deliberate actions taken by the parties to the conflict," van Meegen said. "The Security Council now has the chance to change this. Any member state blocking strong Security Council action will be complicit in Yemen's disaster." The Saudi-led coalition's continued restrictions on imports at Hodeida Port, Yemen's largest, are having a particularly detrimental effect on the humanitarian situation, NRC said. The coalition imposed a complete blockade in November 2017. While the coalition has eased the blockade on Hodeida Port for two consecutive periods of 30-days since December 20, uncertainty around the operation of the port together with ongoing bureaucratic hurdles have reduced the confidence of shipping companies in using Yemen's Red Sea ports. Based on data from the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), NRC calculates that fuel imports have constituted only 32% of the estimated amount required this year so far.

"Yemen's 29 million people can't survive on humanitarian aid alone," van Meegen said. "When the coalition chokes imports, they strangle a whole population. More and more people are pushed into aid dependency, more are nudged closer to starvation."

The most recent 30-day grace period on the ports' blockade expired on February 19 without any statement from the Coalition indicating whether the ports would remain open.

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