

CIMP special report, June 12

# Protection Forecast Al-Hudaydah

It is widely anticipated that a military push to capture Al-Hudaydah city will be initiated in the short to medium term.

Negotiations are ongoing but currently not the most likely scenario, which instead is an intensification in armed conflict. In the short term, this is likely in the form of air raids and naval shelling, potentially including on vital infrastructure and non-military targets.

As airstrikes in urban areas generate significantly higher civilian casualties on average than airstrikes in rural areas, heavy airstrikes on Al-Hudaydah city would likely see significant civilian casualties.

Clashes and heavy airstrikes are anticipated to take place on the main road running through Hays, Al-Garrahi and Zabid, as well as roads to the east of Al-Hudaydah city. These are areas with a high population concentration, and therefore the civilian impact is expected to increase.

Attempts at cutting off main routes to Al-Hudaydah city would also generate significant civilian impact by restricting civilians from fleeing violence and by hindering vital supplies from reaching the city.

Vessels would likely be deterred from entering the port during an assault, both related to risks associated with any fighting in the city and to off loaded goods not being able to leave the city.

Should the offensive reach Al-Hudaydah city, the impact on the population from urban warfare would be severe and civilians in impacted areas would likely be trapped inside their homes, with limited options of fleeing violence or relocating to safer areas.

Coastal and southern areas are heavily mined, and further planting of landmines around Al-Hudaydah city and along the main road in southern districts would generate a long-term civilian impact.



**CIVILIAN IMPACT MONITORING PROJECT**  
a service of the Protection Cluster Yemen

# Special Briefing Al-Hudaydah

## 1.1. Recent Conflict Developments

*(Map shows civilian impact hotspots from May 24 to June 6)*

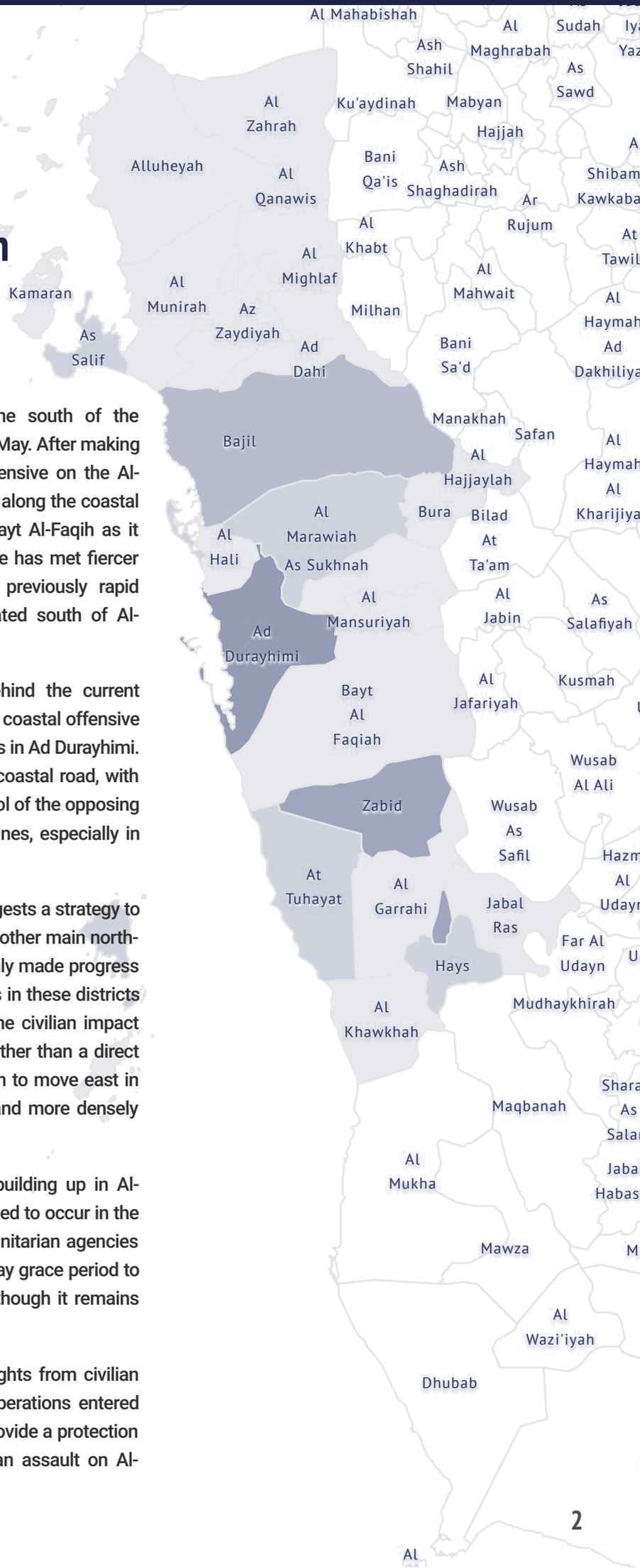
The frontlines in Al-Hudaydah moved rapidly from the south of the governorate to the edge of Al-Hudaydah city at the end of May. After making steady gains in the first few weeks of the renewed offensive on the Al-Tuhat front, the offensive suddenly moved swiftly north along the coastal road, advancing through Al-Tuhat and neighbouring Bayt Al-Faqih as it faced surprisingly little opposition. However, the offensive has met fiercer resistance since reaching Ad Durayhimi, slowing the previously rapid progress, with fighting in Ad Durayhimi now concentrated south of Al-Hudaydah airport.

During the first week of June, clashes broke out behind the current frontlines, in Al-Jah in Bayt Al-Faqih, as supply lines to the coastal offensive were disrupted, hampering the progress of offensive forces in Ad Durayhimi. The offensive also continues to be concentrated on the coastal road, with in-land territory and the central main road still under control of the opposing group. Fighting is also continuing on the southern frontlines, especially in Hays.

The attempts to push through Al-Jah in Bayt Al-Faqih suggests a strategy to advance eastward and inland on a second axis along the other main north-south road in the governorate. So far, the offensive has only made progress along the coastal road, away from the main urban centres in these districts and removed from large civilian populations. As such, the civilian impact has been fairly limited and mainly caused by airstrikes rather than a direct result of the clashes. However, with the possible intention to move east in the governorate towards more heavily populated areas and more densely cultivated land the civilian impact will likely increase.

Over the past two weeks, tension has been gradually building up in Al-Hudaydah city, and a military escalation is widely anticipated to occur in the short to medium term. A warning was delivered to humanitarian agencies by international partners on 9 June, giving them a three-day grace period to leave Al-Hudaydah city ahead of a potential escalation, though it remains unclear what form this escalation would take.

This short assessment seeks to extract analytical highlights from civilian impact in Al-Hudaydah governorate since the military operations entered the south of the governorate in December 2017, and to provide a protection forecast on likely scenarios for civilian impact should an assault on Al-Hudaydah take place.



## Civilian Impact Incidents, Casualties and Vulnerability

Civilian impact incidents	<b>192</b>	Psychosocial trauma incidents	<b>155</b>
Fatalities	<b>366</b>	Incidents with vulnerability	<b>125</b>
Children / Women	<b>55/47</b>	Children & Women	<b>103</b>
Injured	<b>228</b>	Children/Women/IDPs	<b>10/11/1</b>
Children / Women	<b>27/19</b>		



### 1.2. Civilian Impact December-May

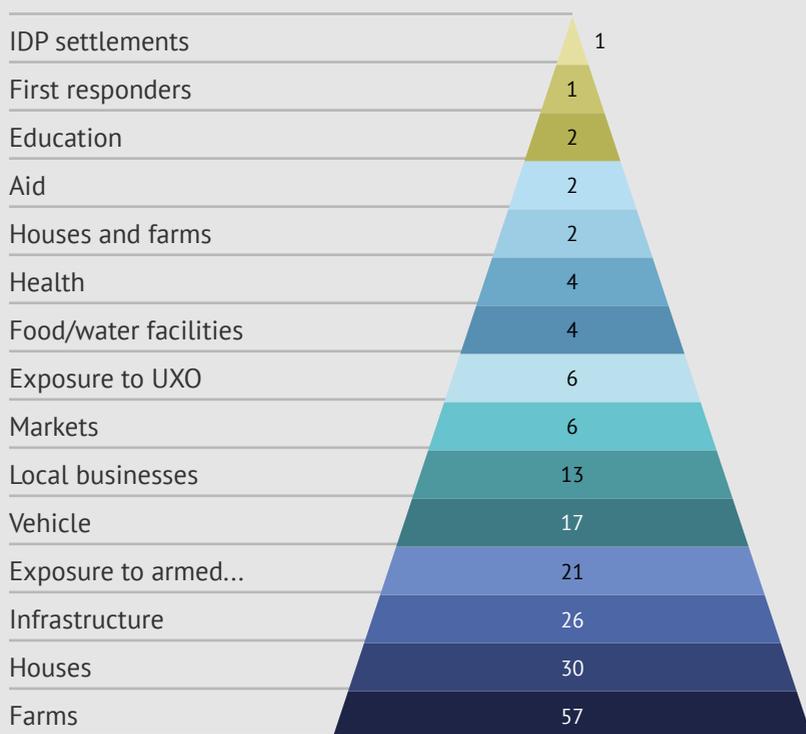
Since the offensive in southern Al-Hudaydah started in December 2017, armed violence impacting on farms and local businesses in Al-Hudaydah has generated significant loss of livelihood for local communities. 480 households in Al-Hudaydah lost livelihood as a direct result of armed violence damaging and destroying critical sources of income in agricultural and fishing communities.

Another consequence of the armed violence was displacement (87 households) as a result of damage or destruction of civilian homes. In addition to the displacement recorded by CIMP from incidents of armed violence directly impacting on civilian homes, a large number of people were also displaced as a result of general fighting and landmines pushing them out of the areas they were living in.

Another trend that emerged was targeting of main roads, civilian vehicles, and fuel stations. The majority of these incidents took place along the main north/south road running from Al-Khawkhah through central districts to Al-Hudaydah city. Health, water infrastructure and aid were also impacted, with 455,571 households experiencing restricted access to basic services and 15,630 households experiencing restricted access to basic needs (food/water infrastructure).

Airstrikes constituted 75% of civilian impact, with shelling 11%, armed clashes 5%, landmines 4%, IEDs 2%, exposure to UXOs 2%, use of SAF 0.5% and deployment of troops 0.5%.

The civilian impact was largely concentrated in southern districts, with 72% of incidents occurring in southern districts where the military offensive had been concentrated for most of the last six months: Hays (44 incidents), Al-Tuhayat (31), Al-Garrahi (28), Al-Khawkhah (18), Zabid (14) and Jabal Ras (3).



### Distribution of civilian impact incidents Dec 1- May 31

A high number of incidents impacted on farms (57), as these were frequently targeted by airstrikes. Further impacting on the economic infrastructure in Al-Hudaydah were incidents impacting on markets (6) and local businesses (13), including factories and fishing boats.

Houses were also damaged by armed violence in 30 incidents, generating displacement.

The targeting of main roads (10) and civilian vehicles (17), in addition to fuel stations (2) was another trend that emerged in the governorate, mainly targeting supply lines to the frontlines.

Health, water infrastructure and aid were also frequently hit (10 incidents), with the whole population of the governorate potentially impacted as critical sites were damaged.

## 1.3. Protection forecast

It is widely anticipated that a military push to capture Al-Hudaydah city will be initiated in the short to medium term, though there is still a small window of opportunity for political negotiations to put a military escalation on hold while the parties discuss a political solution. However, negotiations are not the most likely scenario, which instead is an intensification in armed conflict. In the short term, this is likely in the form of air raids and naval shelling, potentially including on vital infrastructure and non-military targets. This would include targeting of main roads, fuel stations, governmental compounds, factories, educational institutions and potentially hotels within the city.

As airstrikes in urban areas generate significantly higher civilian casualties on average than airstrikes in rural areas (e.g. an average of 7.5 civilian casualties per airstrike with a recorded civilian impact in Sana'a capital over the past six months, compared to an average of 3 casualties per airstrike in Al-Hudaydah), heavy airstrikes on Al-Hudaydah city would likely see significant civilian casualties.

For the ground offensive to successfully advance on the city it will first need to secure southern supply routes, including in-land routes, especially the main road running through Hays, Al-Garrahi and Zabid, as well as cutting off roads used by the other side to the east of Al-Hudaydah city. Clashes and heavy airstrikes are therefore anticipated to take place in these areas, preceding an advance on the city. These are also areas with a higher population concentration than along the coastal road, and therefore the civilian impact is expected to increase, especially the impact on farms, houses, main roads, fuel stations and other infrastructure sites, and potentially also on markets and other local businesses.

Attempts at cutting off main routes to Al-Hudaydah city would also generate significant civilian impact: first, by restricting civilians from fleeing violence, and second, by hindering vital supplies from reaching the city. There would also, inevitably, be an impact on the port, with armed violence in the city's environs limiting the onward transport of goods arriving at the port.

As the stated strategic goal of the offensive, and also one of the main civilian infrastructure sites not just in Al-Hudaydah, but for the entire country, any impact on the port would be critical. Damage to the port cannot be ruled out, both through direct targeting and indirect fire. Vessels would likely be deterred from entering the port during an assault, both related to risks associated with any fighting in the city, but also as off loaded goods would not be able to leave the city. In recent weeks there has already been two incidents involving civilian vessels (a Turkish-flagged vessel carrying wheat and a WFP-chartered vessel) that may be an indication of the destabilisation of the waters off Al-Hudaydah, which, in turn, could deter maritime traffic, including critical humanitarian and commercial imports. Impact on the port is also likely if an amphibious landing is initiated. Even if this does not necessarily involve the port directly, it would put an immediate halt on all commercial and humanitarian traffic to the port.

Should the offensive reach Al-Hudaydah city, the impact on the population from urban warfare would be severe and include damage to civilian homes and restricted access of civilians to food, water, medical help and other basic services. Civilians in impacted areas would likely be trapped inside their homes, with limited options of fleeing violence or relocating to safer areas.

Finally, retreating forces have previously laid landmines to slow the advance of their opponents in the governorate, and the same tactic is likely to be deployed should an offensive on Al-Hudaydah city take place. Coastal and southern areas are already heavily mined, and further planting of landmines around Al-Hudaydah city and along the main road in southern districts would generate a long-term civilian impact.