

Leading humanitarian agencies warn that their life-saving assistance is at risk of collapsing in Yemen

After more than a month of heavy fighting in Yemen, a group of 22 major aid agencies in Yemen have warned today their life-saving assistance risk coming to an abrupt end within a week unless land, sea and air routes are opened immediately for the importation of fuel.

“We could run out of fuel within days” said Hajir Maalim, Action Against Hunger (ACF) country director “We need to operate at least three vehicles to bring medical staff and supplies to more than 1,600 severely undernourished children in Hodeida, in northern Yemen. If we cannot get more fuel within 10 days, these operations will cease and the lives of these children will be put at great risk. Children should not face death because of fuel shortages. It’s unacceptable.”

Even before the latest escalation in violence, 16 million Yemenis – 60% of the population – were in need of humanitarian assistance and 13 million – half the population – did not have access to clean water and sanitation. Amid escalating violence, these humanitarian needs are now growing rapidly, in 2014 ten million people were food insecure, and recent estimates put this number closer to 20 million, representing 80% of the entire population.

“The fuel shortages in Yemen have reached critical levels. Without regular imports, it will soon become impossible for us to deliver life-saving assistance to the growing numbers in need,” informed Edward Santiago, Save the Children Country Director. “We have managed to provide life-saving assistance including food aid, water and sanitation, and medical supplies benefiting more than 50,000 people, including 21,000 children, since the conflict escalated, but we need to do more. We are extremely concerned as our fuel stocks are running low, while the needs are multiplying. Millions of lives are at risk, in particular children, and soon we will not be able to respond.”

Under normal circumstances, Yemen needs at least 144,000 barrels of oil per day to sustain its economy and infrastructure. The lack of fuel is directly contributing to the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. Entire communities are without water as local water supply systems also rely on fuel to pump ground water to the surface before it is treated. Medical facilities are stretched to the limit, with many closed and others unable to provide even basic services. The telecommunications network will reportedly shut down within days. Electricity is only on a few hours a day at best.

“An immediate and permanent end to the conflict must be found now and land, sea and air routes must be re-opened to allow basic commodities like food, fuel and medical supplies to reach millions in desperate need,” said Grace Ommer, Oxfam’s country director in Yemen.

With the situation now at a critical level, Yemen’s INGO Forum are jointly calling on all parties to the conflict to urgently open land, sea and air routes in order to allow essential imports to immediately resume. The recent announcement of a potential humanitarian pause to military operations will not alleviate the humanitarian impacts of the current conflict, and INGO Forum members urge parties to the conflict to find an immediate and permanent end to the conflict.



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