

# Post-Saleh guerrilla conflicts leave scores of civilians dead

In the past 10 days, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, said in a statement that all sides in the country's conflict are indiscriminately killing civilians. He said airstrikes by the Saudi-led Arab coalition alone killed 68 noncombatants in one day.

The UN last week described the civil conflict in Yemen as an "absurd" war in which all parties, including a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia, were showing a "complete disregard for human life."

"This absurd war...has only resulted in the destruction of the country and the incommensurate suffering of its people, who are being punished as part of a futile military campaign by both sides," McGoldrick added.

McGoldrick cited two air raids by the Saudi-led Arab coalition on December 26 that together claimed scores of civilian lives.

The first killed 54 civilians, including eight children, at a "crowded popular market" in Taez province, and the second, in the Red Sea province of Hodeida, killed 14 people from the same family, the statement said.

On 5 December, Yemen's former president and rebel leader Ali Abdullah Saleh was assassinated in the area of Khawlan in the capital Sanaa as he was fleeing Houthi rebels. His envoy was ambushed with an RPG rocket and he was then reportedly assassinated by gunfire. Some of his aides were killed, while others were injured.

Over the past 33 months, the situation on the ground in Yemen has witnessed many developments, other than the killing of Saleh, such as the spread of Cholera, famine, and drought. Another 41 civilians had been killed in other fighting in Yemen in the past 10 days, according to the statement.

"I remind all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi-led coalition, of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure and to always distinguish between civilian and military objects,"

McGoldrick said.

He said that the conflict in Yemen has no military solution and that negotiations are necessary to resolve it.

Yemen, which was plunged into a brutal civil war in March 2015, has reached another dark milestone. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced last Thursday that more than one million people in the Arabian Peninsula country are now affected by cholera.

In November, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that almost 2,200 people had already died from the waterborne disease. The problem has been exacerbated by worsening hygiene and sanitation conditions in the country.

The Red Cross emphasised that cholera is not the only problem plaguing the country's civilian population, adding that 80% of Yemenis lack access to food, fuel, clean drinking water, and healthcare. Although the number of cholera cases registered each week has gone down over the past three months, WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said, "the epidemic is not yet over, and more concerted efforts should be deployed to ensure its control in the immediate term and the prevention of future outbreaks."

Yemen relies heavily on food and fuel imports and the fuel is used to distribute food throughout the country and to keep electricity running. Water supply is also affected since the necessary installations to pump water and adequately treat it are out of order due to the fuel shortage, thus making waterborne diseases a major concern.

However, in parallel the coalition's aggression against Houthi rebels, there are the ballistic missiles which continue to be fired at Saudi lands leading to more retaliation on Yemeni lands. On 19 December, a missile was fired at the Yamama Palace in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. On the same day, the Saudi-led coalition said it had intercepted the ballistic missile south of the capital. The attack was confirmed by a spokesperson for the Houthi movement, who said that a ballistic missile had targeted the royal court, where they claimed a meeting of Saudi leaders was taking place that Tuesday.

Yemen has devolved into economic instability and political turmoil since Saleh's forced resignation in 2012, after Yemen's Arab Spring uprising. The political

crisis resulted in the house arrest of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who at the time fled to the south and rescinded his resignation. He is currently in self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia.

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Source: <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/02/post-saleh-guerrilla-conflicts-leave-scores-civilians-dead/>

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