

The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

Kulsoom Belal

Kulsoom is research associate at the Center for Critical Peace Studies. She can be reached at kulsoom.belal@um.edu.pk

Yemen, on the Arabian Peninsula's southern tip, continues to be the world's greatest humanitarian disaster. Yemen's civil war began in 2015, following conflicts between Yemeni government troops supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as other major power allies, and the Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, backed by Iran. The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of the facts on the ground in Yemen and to comprehend the dire humanitarian situation.

Major Statistics about the Humanitarian Crisis

Yemen's situation has worsened since turmoil erupted in late March 2015, making it one of the poorest countries in the Middle East. According to the UNHCR website, the eight years of war have displaced over 4 million people, with 20.7 million in desperate need of humanitarian aid. In all, 66 percent of the population is in desperate need of aid. Half of Yemen's health facilities have been closed or destroyed, and the nation is on the verge of a large-scale famine, with about 50,000 people living in famine-like circumstances and 5 million more at danger of going hungry by 2022. Yemen was already the most dangerous country in the world before the present catastrophe. Even before the current crisis, Yemen was the most vulnerable country in the Middle East. It ranked among the world's worst in malnutrition rates and half of its population was living in poverty, without access to safe water.

Internally displaced Yemenis are the most vulnerable to food insecurity, with 2.6 million people out of a total population of 4 million experiencing life-threatening food shortages. According to studies, displaced families are four times more likely than the rest of Yemen's population to succumb to starvation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their position, as have resurgence of avoidable illnesses like as cholera, diphtheria, measles, and dengue fever that had been eliminated elsewhere in the globe.

Right now the biggest challenge the world needs to remember and act to is the threat of a large-scale famine, conflict, crumbling services, and long-term displacement. Six years of intensive conflict have brought the nation to the verge of economic collapse, with barely half of the country's health institutions completely operational and more than half of the people unable to satisfy their basic necessities due to a lack of water and resources. According to reports, over 16 million people may go hungry this year, with half a million already experiencing famine-like circumstances.

Fleeing Yemenis

Since the start of the conflict, more than four million Yemenis have been forced from their homes, although the great majority have remained within the nation. Yemen has the fourth highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world, behind Syria, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many internally displaced people have been in exile for more than two years, putting a strain on their limited resources and exposing them to increasingly severe conditions. In Yemen, over 66 percent of IDPs reside in unsafe areas with severe food shortages, as well as a lack of water, healthcare, and sanitation facilities. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic and the fear of a future famine in the country, their condition has grown even more difficult. Despite the violence, Yemen is home to

around 135,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers, making it the world's second largest host of Somali refugees.

Yemen Refugee Camps and Settlements

- In Yemen, nearly 41,000 individuals were displaced in the first half of 2021.
- In April, 7,000 individuals were relocated due to heavy rainfall and flooding, with 75 percent of them being internally displaced.
- One in every four displaced Yemeni households is headed by a woman or girl, with 20% of those under the age of 18 years old.
- Around 66 percent of Yemen's internally displaced people live in hazardous conditions, with widespread food shortages and a lack of essential amenities.
- Kharaz refugee camp was home to roughly 9,500 refugees and asylum seekers as of September 2021, the majority of them were from Somalia and Ethiopia. Women and girls made up more than half of the group.

Effects on Yemeni children and women

The problem is disproportionately affecting women and children. They make up 79 percent of the displaced population, and their situation is becoming increasingly tough.

Since the battle began, at least 10,000 children have been murdered or injured, and many more have been recruited to fight. Internally displaced children number around 2 million. Access to education and health services has also been affected due to the destruction and closure of schools and hospitals. Over two million youngsters are out of school, putting them at an even greater risk. Meanwhile, Yemen is experiencing one of the greatest food crises in the world, with roughly 2.3 million children under the age of five suffering from severe malnutrition. 400,000 of them are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition and may die unless they receive immediate treatment. At least one kid dies every ten minutes from avoidable illnesses, and one out of every four children in some sections of the nation is now critically malnourished. In addition, by 2021, more than 2.3 million children under the age of five may be suffering from acute malnutrition. Without immediate care, tens of thousands of more children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition and perhaps death.

Coming to women, one in every four displaced Yemeni households is now headed by a woman or girl, with 20% of those under the age of 18 years old. Due to established societal traditions, they are obliged to take on the task of supporting their families while also dealing with inequity, restricted access to assistance, and other impediments. Many people can no longer afford basic meals due to high inflation and a lack of job possibilities, putting them at danger of famine, gender-based abuse, exploitation, and early marriage. According to UN projections, over a million pregnant and breastfeeding women are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in the coming years.
