Yemen facing largest famine the world has seen for decades, Warns UN aid chief

Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator said that Yemen will be gripped by famine – one the likes of which the world has not seen in years – if the blockade on basic supplies into the country imposed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition is not lifted immediately, the top United Nations humanitarian official has warned.

“It will be the largest famine the world has seen for many decades,” Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, told the media late Wednesday, after briefing the Security Council.

Three years into a brutal conflict, Yemen depends on imports – amounting to up to 90 per cent of its daily needs – and millions in the country are being kept alive by humanitarian aid.

The fighting has also all but collapsed the country's health, and water and sanitation systems. Combined with the lack of food, millions of lives – including those of children – will be lost as their bodies will simply not have the strength to fight off disease.

Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Jamie Mcgoldrick, on continued violence affecting civilians in Yemen

I am horrified at the continued violence perpetrated by all parties to the conflict in Yemen which again, this week, claimed the lives of innocent civilians, including thirteen children.

On 1 November, 31 people, including six children, were killed and 26 others were wounded by an air strike that struck a busy night market in Sahar district in Sa’ada governorate. Field reports indicate that on 3 November another air strike hit a house in Baqim district in Sa’ada governorate, killing a whole family of seven people, including two children and two women.

I am equally horrified by the continued indiscriminate shelling occurring in Taizz city. On 2 November, shelling in a residential area in Al Onsowa neighborhood in Taizz city killed five children and injured two others. All the children killed or injured were between seven and 15 years old.
For Yemenis and migrants, protracted conflict an 'endless nightmare' – head of UN agency

Amid worsening famine and cholera in war-torn Yemen, the head of the United Nations migration agency has called for greater humanitarian access to enable relief workers reach those most in need and save lives.

“The authorities have a responsibility to give humanitarians more access, including reopening the airport for essential aid deliveries, and the world has an obligation to come to the aid of the Yemeni people,” said William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), on a visit to the country.

Responding to the outbreak has been further complicated as the conflict in Yemen has left the country's water and sanitation systems in near-ruin and almost 80 per cent of the population – some 21 million people – as well as thousands of migrants dependent on humanitarian aid.

“The world's worst cholera outbreak is now part of this volatile mix and, as mind-numbing as it may seem, one million Yemenis are expected to contract the deadly disease by the end of this year,” added Mr. Swing.

According to estimates, more than 2,000 people have succumbed to the deadly disease since October last year and 750,000 have been hit with 5,000 additional people being infected every day. Furthermore, more than three million Yemeni children under the age of 5 are at risk of severe acute malnutrition as an ever-present risk of famine looms larger.

“The internecine conflict, which has convulsed Yemen for over two years already, shows no sign of being resolved,” said the IOM Director General, noting that the situation of the nearly 6,000 migrants who continue to enter the country each month is of particular concern.

“They come in the hope that they can make their way through Yemen to the Gulf countries to find work.”

However, few realize the grave dangers they are likely to face along the route, including exploitation, abuse and abduction by criminal gangs for hefty ransoms.

“For Yemenis and migrants, the protracted conflict has become an endless nightmare,” said Mr. Swing.

Yemen facing largest famine the world ….

“What kills people in famine is infections […] because their bodies have consumed themselves, reducing totally the ability to fight off things which a healthy person can,” added Mr. Lowcock.

We need to see is a reduction of blockages on all sides, not an increase UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock. Underscoring that an immediate resumption of regular UN and relief organizations' air services to the capital, Sana'a, and Aden are critical to save lives, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that a clear and immediate assurance is also urgently needed that those services will not be disrupted.

Furthermore, all vessels that have passed inspection by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism should not be subjected to interference, delays to or blockages so that they can proceed to port as rapidly as possible, he added.

Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator ….

These latest events are unfortunately part of the tragic pattern of the disregard that the parties to the conflict continue to show for the laws of war and their obligations and responsibilities to protect civilians’ lives. All parties to this brutal conflict must act in the interest of the people of Yemen and in line with international humanitarian law.

I repeat the wide array of calls by the international community to all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law. In particular, I ask them to adhere to the principles of distinction between civilians and combatants and proportionality in the conduct of hostilities and refrain from directing attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.
Otrah, a Role Model Beekeeper Entrepreneur for All Women

Otrah, 24, a young woman who lives in a very small house in Aslam district owns 30 bee hives and sells honey to different markets and individuals in Hajjah city.

Highlights from Otrah Story

- Otrah from only inherited skills to an entrepreneur in bees keeping
- Otrah was provided 16 hives from ERRY but now she owns 30
- Otrah from extreme poverty to annual revenue grows into 600,000 YR

“Currently, I have 30 bee hives. The annual average sale for one hive is 20,000 YR which makes my annual revenue grows into 600,000 YR. With this money, I can managed providing life basic needs for my family”

Otrah saved money through the rapid employment activities- Cash for Work. She also received Life and Business Skills training in complement to her income generating activity. Part of her training, which was conducted under the supervision and coaching of a professional consultant, included Simple Business Plan Development and Basic Marketing Concepts.

Otrah life took a new turn when she found out about UNDP 3x6 approach - part of the EU-funded Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen ERRY Joint programme. ERRY- UNDP 3x6 approach gives a golden opportunity to many young entrepreneurs especially women who want empower and accomplish their dreams of becoming more independent and responsible.

When Otrah was young, she learnt the skills of keeping bees from her father who used to have his own hives farm, but since she got married and moved into her husband who has lost his job due to the current situation in Yemen, the quality of her life massively deteriorated. Otrah inherited the bees keeping skills but does not have money or resources that could help her build her life- dream bee hive farm.

“I remember when I first heard of this programme, I eagerly hurried to register, but I was asked to provide my personal ID or pay a thousand YR to get one. Back then, neither I nor my husband could afford to pay such a petty cash”

Despite the extreme poverty and hardship, Otrah determination and continuing in a course of action without regards to discouragement and previous failure has eventually paid off as she is now a successful honey keeper entrepreneur.

“I first started my project with 16 honey hives provided by ERRY JP, but in less than a year, I managed to have 30 hives. If you want to ask me how this turning point has positively impacted our life, then you simply need to see how my little two kids has become happier and healthier”

Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) programme is a joint-initiative funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by FAO, ILO, UNDP and WFP in four governorates in Yemen (Hajjah, Hodeidah, Lahj and Abyan). The three-year joint programme aims to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of crisis-affected rural communities through support to livelihoods stabilization, food security, local governance, social cohesion and improved access to sustainable energy.
With much of Yemen's air, sea and land entry points closed, heads of three United Nations agencies on Thursday called for immediate lifting of such blockade in the conflict-ravaged southern Arabian country so that lifesaving humanitarian supplies can pass.

"While the Saudi-led military coalition has partially lifted the recent blockade of Yemen, closure of much of the country's air, sea and land ports is making an already catastrophic situation far worse," said a joint statement issued by World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Anthony Lake, and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"The space and access we need to deliver humanitarian assistance is being choked off, threatening the lives of millions of vulnerable children and families," the statement added.

Since 2015, Yemen has been in a conflict between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement.

The UN agency chiefs jointly appealed for the coalition to permit entry of lifesaving supplies to Yemen, describing the situation "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world" in which more than 20 million people, including over 11 million children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, at least 14.8 million are without basic healthcare and an outbreak of cholera has resulted in more than 900,000 suspected cases.

"Some 17 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from and 7 million are totally dependent on food assistance. Severe acute malnutrition is threatening the lives of almost 400,000 children. As supplies run low, food prices rise dramatically, putting thousands more at risk," the statement said.

The statement said that all of the country's ports -- including those in areas held by the opposition -- should be reopened without delay, as that is the only way that UN-chartered ships can deliver the vital humanitarian cargo that the population needs to survive.

Flights from the UN Humanitarian Air Service -- into and out of Yemen -- should be given immediate clearance to resume.

"The clock is ticking and stocks of medical, food and other humanitarian supplies are already running low," the statement said, warning that the cost of this blockade is being measured in the number of lives that are lost.

"On behalf of all those whose lives are at imminent risk, we reiterate our appeal to allow humanitarian access in Yemen without further delay," it said.
WHO delivers medicines as diptheria spreads in Yemen

WHO has delivered medicines to tackle an outbreak of diptheria in Yemen, warning that sustained humanitarian access is critical to stopping its spread. The shipment of 1,000 vials of life-saving anti-toxins and 17 tonnes of medical supplies arrived in Sanaa on Monday (November 27) after being stalled by the three-week closure of sea and air ports.

"It is shocking that in 2017, there are children dying of an ancient disease that is vaccine-preventable and can be easily treated," said Dr Nevio Zagaria, WHO Country Representative in Yemen. The anti-toxins can help stop the spread of the bacterium to vital organs in patients already infected with diptheria. But no supplies were available in Yemen before the arrival of the WHO shipment on Monday.

Antibiotics and vaccines are also critical to treating and preventing the highly infectious respiratory disease – both of which are in short supply in Yemen. "In recent days, children and adults have died while the medicines needed to save their lives were available only a few hours away. We need unconditional and sustained access to all areas of Yemen to stop these unconscionable deaths from malnutrition, cholera, and now diptheria," Zagaria added.

Diptheria is making an alarming comeback in the war torn country, with 189 clinically diagnosed cases and 20 deaths – mostly children and young adults – in the last three months.

Most diptheria cases and deaths have been reported in Ibb governorate but the outbreak is spreading fast, already affecting 13 governorates. The closest points of entry to Ibb are in Sana’a and Hodeida, making it crucial that Sana’a airport and the port of Hodeida remain open.

Despite the conflict and recent closures, WHO, UNICEF, and partners have continued to work with available supplies, vaccinating 8,500 children under five years in al-Sadah and Yarim districts in Ibb governorate during November. A vaccination campaign targeting 300,000 children younger than 12 months began on Saturday (November 25). Further vaccination rounds for more than 3 million children and young adults in priority districts are due in Dece.

New US$ 150 Million Project to focus on Yemen's conflict affected cities

The World Bank announced today a new project aimed at restoring basic services in some of the Yemen’s cities hardest hit by the ongoing conflict. Funded by a US$150 million grant from IDA, the World Bank’s fund for the world’s poorest countries, the new project will target issues like uncollected trash and untreated sewage water, both of which are contributing directly to the current cholera epidemic. In addition, the project will address the urgent needs for road repair to improve mobility, and access to electricity for critical services.

The Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project will include 19 cities from across the country: Aden, Al-Dhale’e, Al-Hodeida, Al-Mukalla, Amran, Bajil, Bayhan, Bayt Al-Faqih, Dhamar, Ibb, Lahj, Rida, Saadah, Sana’a, Say’oun, Shihir, Taiz, Yarim, and Zinjibar. The project aims to support 1.4 million Yemeni, around half of them women. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) will implement the project in partnership with three long-standing Yemeni entities that have continued working despite the conflict: The Public Works Project, the Road Maintenance Fund, and the Urban Water Project Management Unit. The partnership with these entities will help preserve and strengthen local service delivery capacities.

“Through our ongoing needs assessments, we have seen the extent of the impact of the conflict on Yemen’s cities, and the consequences for millions of Yemenis living there,” said Dr. Asad Alam, World Bank Group Country Director for Yemen, Egypt, and Djibouti. “As a range of services and infrastructure have been affected, this project is designed to restore services simultaneously across several sectors to provide coherent support to the affected population. Our aim is to help Yemenis, and their local institutions, to cope with the conflict and preserve hope for a better tomorrow.”
New funding provides much needed boost for Yemen aid operations, but needs outstrip means

A United Nations-managed humanitarian emergency fund has allocated $70 million to strife-ridden Yemen, enabling critical life-saving relief operations across large parts of the country.

"Through this new allocation, [humanitarians] will respond to the immediate causes of food insecurity and malnutrition; improve access to food, nutrition, health, water and sanitation services; and continue to support the ongoing cholera response," said Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, in a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"It will also provide a minimum package of assistance including shelter, non-food items and protection services to the most vulnerable individuals among internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities," he added.

Approved Wednesday, the latest allocation by the OCHA-managed Yemen Humanitarian Fund has prioritized 95 districts across 15 of the country’s 22 governorates, including Aden, Al Bayda Al Dhale’e, Hadramaut, Hajjah, Lahj, Sa’ada Shabwah and Taiz.

It will also assist national non-governmental organizations which will implement more than 40 per cent of the total grant through some 33 projects run by 26 national relief actors (amounting to about $31.3 million).

Even before the eruption of violence in 2015, Yemen had been suffering chronic poverty and under development.

However, close to three years of relentless conflict has left more than three-fourths of Yemenis in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs and over 17.8 million people food insecure – 8.4 million among them severely food insecure and at risk of starvation.

Basic social services in Yemen have virtually collapsed. Humanitarian coordinator for Yemen Mr. McGoldrick added.

The latest, much-needed allocation – made possible through contributions from 18 donors – will help many, but more resources are urgently needed to ensure that the $1 billion funding gap in the 2017 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan can be closed and all those who need assistance can be reached.

"Basic social services in Yemen have virtually collapsed, therefore the continued provision of humanitarian assistance remains a lifeline for millions of people who continue to struggle in a crisis that does not make many headlines," Mr. McGoldrick added.
Yemen’s Sana’a airport opens after blockade; UNICEF says vaccine delivery ‘cannot be a one-off’

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on Monday warned that more than 11 million Yemeni children – almost every single Yemeni boy and girl – are in acute need of humanitarian assistance, despite the successful delivery of 1.9 million doses of vaccines to Sana’a airport on Sunday.

“Yesterday’s success cannot be a one-off,” Geert Cappalaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa said Sunday at a press briefing in Amman, Jordan, welcoming the reopening of Sana’a airport, which enabled the agency’s first humanitarian delivery in three weeks.

Vaccines are urgently needed for a planned campaign to vaccinate 600,000 children across Yemen against diphtheria, meningitis, whooping cough, pneumonia and tuberculosis.

“Today, it is fair to say that Yemen is one of the worst places on earth to be a child,” he said. “The reason behind this is very straightforward: decades of conflict, decades also of chronic underdevelopment.”

Today it is estimated that every 10 minutes a child in Yemen is dying from preventable diseases, he added, noting that the outbreak of acute watery diarrhea and cholera this year is not a surprise, because the water and sanitation system throughout the country is almost entirely devastated and the health system is on its knees.

“The war in Yemen is sadly a war on children,” he said, calling on all parties to the conflict to stop fighting.

Nearly 5,000 children have been killed or seriously injured over the last two and a half years alone, thousands of schools and health facilities have been damaged or completely destroyed, and two million children suffer acute malnutrition.

Unfortunately, the vaccines stocks, despite the 1.9 million that UNICEF delivered on Sunday, are running out, Mr. Cappalaere said, calling for more vaccines to be delivered.

He also stressed the urgent need for affordable fuel, as pumping water requires using generators in the absence of a national power grid.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that following the announcement on 22 November by the Saudi-led coalition that Sana’a airport and Al Hudaydah seaport will be reopened for humanitarian and relief efforts, the UN submitted notification of humanitarian movements and static locations to the coalition to resume the transport of aid personnel and humanitarian cargo to northern parts of Yemen.

Almost three weeks after the blockade was imposed, essential commodities like food, fuel, safe water and medical supplies have started running low in the country or have seen their prices skyrocket.

There continues to be a grave risk of further death, disease and starvation. On 20 November, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FewsNet) warned that should the blockade continue, many areas of Yemen are likely to experience famine within three to four months, said OCHA.
The Question of Palestine is inextricably linked with the history of the United Nations and is one of the longest unresolved issues on the Organization’s agenda. Seventy years since the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 181, a sovereign and independent State of Palestine has yet to emerge alongside the State of Israel. I remain convinced that the two-state solution recognized by that resolution is the only premise for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The resolution of this conflict would also create momentum for greater stability throughout the region.

Last August, during my visit to Israel and Palestine, leaders on both sides restated their commitment to a negotiated peace. I encouraged them to tangibly demonstrate this commitment and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations. The recent positive developments on intra-Palestinian unity should be harnessed by all to move the process in the right direction.

I reiterate my readiness to work with all stakeholders, including the Middle East Quartet and countries in the region, to support a serious political process, drawing on all relevant UN resolutions, international law and agreements, that will realize a two-state solution, end half a century of occupation and resolve all final status issues. Now is the time to end the conflict by establishing an independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.