

IN NEED OF A MIRACLE



Ahmad noticed a man washing a car near the small shop where he'd stopped to pick up a few supplies for the office of the nonprofit where he works. The man was moving slowly in the hot sun and his deep wrinkles reminded Ahmad of his grandfather, who'd passed away before Yemen's war broke out in 2015. Ahmad remembered how his grandfather had spent most afternoons sitting in the shade of the old city wall drinking tea with the other old men from their neighborhood, telling stories and observing the hustle and bustle of the local market. Now, tea, sugar, and milk have become luxuries for many Yemeni households and men like Ahmad's grandfather as well as very young boys wander the streets looking for odd jobs.

Once Ahmad finished his purchases, he pulled his car across the street, asked the man to wash it, and began chatting with him. On hearing the man's dialect, Ahmad knew immediately that he'd been displaced, just as Ahmad was. The man explained to Ahmad how he'd lived his whole life in his ancestral family home, until the frontlines of Yemen's conflict shifted into his district and the house was destroyed. He'd then fled south with his family in search of safety, and now, at age 64, for the first time in his life, he was homeless. He told Ahmad that he and his family were living on the streets of Aden without shelter, and that by washing cars he could provide them with just enough for a basic meal or two each day.

Ahmad's heart felt heavy listening to the man's all-too-familiar story. As he paid him for the car wash, he also gave him a hygiene kit that he happened to have with him—left over from his organization's most recent distribution to Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The man began to thank him so profusely that Ahmad had to pull away quickly to hide his tears. He knew that even the smallest gesture, like a hygiene kit, brought hope to these families fighting for survival—but he wanted to do more. However, just a week ago he'd been told to remove more names from the list of families he distributes food baskets to every other month. "How can we cut them off when their needs are more than before?" he'd asked.

"There's war in Sudan now, on top of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, and the invasion of Ukraine," Ahmad's manager explained. "Plus, the news about Yemen is focused on the peace talks these days. But we're doing all we can to help our partners understand that after eight years of war these families have no assets left and still have no income."

Driving back to the office, Ahmad kept thinking about the man who'd washed his car, the families he'd recently removed from his food list, and his manager's words. There were so many people with nowhere left to turn. "God," he pleaded, "the needs are just too great. We need a miracle!"

Yemenis over 60, like the man who washed Ahmad's car, are among the groups most acutely impacted by the food, fuel, and financial crises that have continued to escalate in Yemen through more than eight years of war. According to HelpAge International, 1.65 million older people in Yemen are at risk of starvation and exposure to disease, and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. One study conducted in Aden in October and November of 2022 showed that the older people who participated have access to just two meals a day at most.¹ In another 2022 study, most participating households reported that they were only rarely consuming foods such as meat, chicken, fish, many types of fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and eggs.²

Now well into 2023, ongoing peace talks between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis have produced scant hope of an outcome that will have a lasting impact on Yemen's families and the well-being of the generations they represent.³ In the wake of any peace deal, Yemen's young and able men are unlikely to lay down the arms they are being paid to carry by the various political elites vying for control in the country. With a collapsing currency, rising prices, inflation, and no alternatives to earn a living wage, the ongoing economic vulnerability of the population is thus leaving the stage set for the next round of hostilities in the beleaguered nation. Meanwhile, the will and resources to rebuild an economy that incentivizes disarmament remain absent from the negotiating table.⁴

According to the 2022 Global Hunger Index, Yemen ranks worst in the world (out of 121 countries) for level of hunger and 41.4 percent of the population is undernourished.⁵ Within these statistics, are Yemeni children who are experiencing the nightmarish effects of terminal starvation—including the inability to produce tears when weeping. In their silent suffering, these children, their parents, and grandparents are being forgotten in the competing narratives of global crises, and global aid for Yemen continues to decline.⁶ Let's cry out today on behalf of all Yemenis who have grown too weak to cry out for themselves—to our heavenly Father, and to our family, friends, and neighbors—praying for a fresh response to meet their deepening needs.

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1 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/older-people-crisis-yemen-urgent-call-action-policy-brief-march-2023>

2 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/acaps-thematic-report-yemen-social-impact-overview-2022-05-may-2023>

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5-jN_Vqo1o

4 <https://agsiw.org/yemens-day-after-problem/>

5 <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/yemen.html>

6 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/02/opinions/yemen-children-starving-war-us-aid-sadoski/index.html>