

WAR AND HUNGER ESCALATE IN YEMEN



On September 21st, Yemen's Houthi militias held a massive military parade in Sana'a, two days after Houthi negotiators left Riyadh following five days of talks with Saudi officials mediated by Oman.¹ Since then, conflict has been reescalating around Yemen, and over the two-week period of September 28th - October 11th the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) reported 34 incidents of armed violence that impacted civilians in the country. These incidents resulted in 44 civilian casualties and affected 25 farms—threatening livelihoods and critical sources of sustenance.

Taiz saw some of the fiercest fighting during these weeks of accelerating hostilities, both in the city as well as along wider frontlines in the province. Taiz City is the largest urban settlement in Yemen hosting active frontlines and has experienced outbreaks of clashes throughout 2023. Snipers and shelling exchanges result in regular civilian casualties in Taiz, while shelling in particular also triggers

displacement. Meanwhile, nationwide 238 reported incidents of armed violence in the third quarter of this year resulted in:

- 28,564 households facing newly restricted access to water facilities, aid, or food storage.
- 35,536 households facing newly restricted access to health, education, first responders, or worship.
- 10,385 households facing newly restricted access to transport, telecommunications, media, fuel, or electricity.²

As access to food, water, and medicine continues to deteriorate around Yemen,³ rounds of currency depreciation have been compounded by high levels of inflation. In Yemen's south, the value of the Yemeni Riyal (YER) has dropped more than 28 percent against the U.S. dollar (USD) in the last 12 months alone. Meanwhile, with the average monthly salary at 60,000 YER

(approximately \$42 USD), families are struggling to cover just half their food needs for a month, before considering other costs such as water, fuel, medical care, and shelter.⁴ Popular protests have spread across the country as Yemenis have rallied against these deteriorating conditions. The protestors' demands are basic, with many marching under the banner: "bread, water, and power."⁵ A survey by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization showed that in August 2023, 74 percent of households resorted to severe livelihood coping strategies during the month, which damaged the households' future productivity and capacity to manage shocks.⁶ Furthermore, Oxfam reports that 2.2 million Yemeni children under the age of five need treatment for acute malnutrition, a child malnutrition rate among the highest in the world.⁷ While children who receive treatment often recover, access to treatment programs is decreasing with humanitarian aid cuts.⁸

Within these conditions, women often eat least and last as they prioritize children and other family members. Girls are also at increased risk of early marriage as families try to reduce the number of family members they need to feed. This may also be the only means of income available to a household. Samah is one of the many Yemeni women around the country who are trying to keep the members of their households alive in these desperate times. When a missile destroyed a house where three families lived just 300 meters from her own home, Samah fled with her three sons and two daughters. They fled at night, taking only what they could carry in cloth bundles. When they

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- 1 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemen-houthis-flex-military-muscle-parade-riyadh-seeks-ceasefire-2023-09-21/>
- 2 https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/onewebmedia/CIMP%20Quarterly%20Report_2023_Q3.pdf
- 3 <https://www.undp.org/publications/assessing-impact-war-yemen-pathways-recovery>
- 4 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/millions-still-struggling-survive-yemen-cost-food-soars-300-humanitarian-actors-warn-enar>
- 5 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/extreme-hunger-rise-yemen-one-year-end-ceasefire>
- 6 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-high-frequency-monitoring-hfm-snapshot-august-2023-issued-october-15-2023>
- 7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbhMC91P3Ms>
- 8 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7P4aiGvyyY>
- 9 <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/yemen/>, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/yemen>
- 10 <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/iom-yemen-rapid-displacement-tracking-third-quarter-report-july-september-2023>

finally stopped, they tied the cloth from the bundles to a tree to shade them from the sun and found crates to use as a ground covering beneath. That was their only shelter, and they had just enough money to provide food for 10 days. Once that ran out, the spectre of starvation loomed. Samah had no way to feed her five children until a local non-profit reached them with a food basket.

Today, Samah and her children are among the 4.5 million Yemenis living in protracted displacement and Yemen remains among the top six largest internal displacements worldwide. According to the UN's Refugee Agency, 80 percent of these Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are women and children, and most of them have been displaced multiple times over a number of years. More than 1.5 million of Yemen's IDPs live across 2,300 precarious hosting sites where living conditions are unsafe and overcrowded.⁹ Meanwhile, in 2023 an average of 511 households have been displaced across Yemen each month, with displacement increasing seven percent in the third quarter. Safety and security concerns as a result of conflict accounted for 77 percent of the displacements in the third quarter while economic reasons related to conflict accounted for 23 percent.¹⁰

Thus, as new emergencies continue to emerge around the world, Yemeni families like Samah's remain more vulnerable than ever before—with their coping capacities exhausted after over eight years of war. Furthermore, as resource partners have also grown exhausted with Yemen's intractable crisis, humanitarian aid is drying up even though conflict is heating up across Yemen's frontlines. Without a renewed concern for the Yemeni people in the final months of 2023, Samah and her children will be haunted by the spectre of starvation once again.

This month, we ask you to pray for reinforcements—that new organizations would extend their support to the long-suffering Yemeni people. We also ask you to pray for those who have been faithfully standing with Yemenis throughout the protracted conflict, that God would encourage and hearten them to remain steadfast in their partnerships with locally driven initiatives in 2024. Your persevering prayers, gifts, and offerings are a beautiful demonstration of Christ's love for the Yemeni people.