

**Annual INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW
Conference**

**“War in Cities: Exploring the devastating
consequences of armed conflict in urban contexts”**

**Urban Warfare
In Yemen**

Context

The conflict in Yemen has entered its eighth year. Despite a de facto truce since April 2022, the impact and reverberating impact of the conflict in urban areas continues to be major concern and a cause for Yemen being the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world

Three-quarters of the population are considered in need of humanitarian aid

The UN OHCHR documented a total of 17,062 civilian casualties – 6,592 dead and 10,470 injured

Some 5 million have been displaced

Only about 50% of health service are operational, with only 39% are fully functional

Conduct of hostilities

The conflict in Yemen has been marked by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. On one hand the Saudi led Coalition has used airstrikes on a massive scale, and Houthi forces on the other hand, have routinely shelled urban areas, using artillery rockets, mortars, rocket propelled grenades as well as many types of improvised explosive devices have also being used.

The government of Yemen forces and all other armed actors have also used explosive weapons in populated areas

Examples, Aden



Aden

Examples



Aden Examples



Aden Examples



Aden Examples



Aden Examples



Taiz



CENTER FOR
CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT
RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.

Examples



Examples



Examples



Examples



Measures

From CIVIC's engagement with military and security forces and observation on the ground, there is no indication of any use by armed actors in Yemen, of any techniques or forward planning to limit the effects of urban war as part of combat training and mission preparation, and an understanding of weapons effects is an integral part of training.

Long term and reverberating impact

The damage inflicted on the infrastructure and services necessary for food, transport, health, and water threaten civilians and prolong suffering long after the bombing has ended. Yemen has long faced challenges on water scarcity, food insecurity, and poverty. As a result, the impact of explosive weapons is amplified

The destruction of essential infrastructure has contributed to hunger and disease, access to essential services and reduced the ability of Yemenis to access essential services such as clean water and electricity, and to move freely between their homes and even between cities. In Yemen, 24 million people require humanitarian support and are facing severe food insecurity — compounding risks of malnutrition and water-borne diseases.

Gendered impact

The impact of the conflict in Yemen on women has been particularly striking, and goes far beyond the immediate casualty consequences of death and injury. According to the UNHCR, about 75% of IDPs are women and children.

- Approx 32% of girls in Yemen are married before 18. (UNFPA – UNICEF global program)
- Various forms of GBV including FGM are prevalent (UNFPA & UNICEF)
- One in every 4 women face GBV (London school of Hygiene study in 82 countries)
- Displacement makes Women and Girls more vulnerable. (more cases)
- **67%** of districts totally lack GBV service providers
- Low capacities of NNGOs working on GBV

Impact on disability

Handicap International estimates that the pre-conflict estimate of persons with disabilities was three million people. Since the conflict began, more than an additional 1 million people. This has resulted in 86% experiencing problems in accessing services due to barriers such as physical access and safety during travelling, along with economic and social discrimination.

According to HI health facilities have already reported more than 70,000 conflict-related casualties, the survivors of which will likely need specialist care to avoid lifelong impairments.

Community Feedback

Community groups affected by urban warfare in Yemen have told CIVIC that they have repeatedly found themselves bearing the brunt of conflict in Yemen.

One lady in Aden said we lived the 1994 war between north Yemen and south Yemen, missiles and rockets were over our heads, we then lived through the conflict between the Houthis and us in 2015, you see the impact of it in every street, then again on smaller scales we faced local conflicts in 2019 and 2022. We have never had any advance or early warning, we have no bunkers and we live in close proximity to military bases. We know anything may happen anytime and we live with this reality and fear on a daily basis.

Community Feedback

“She added when we see that there is no attempt to rebuild Aden, we think, why? Is there another round of conflict expected? Will there be more conflict and shelling over our heads?”

Community feedback

In Marib, communities have told us that they have been fleeing repeatedly since 2015.

One lady said to CIVIC:

“We have fled more than 3 times and every time the clashes come close to us. We have had enough and we have come to the decision that we will not flee anymore. If clashes come near us again, we will not flee, we will stay, come what may even if we die. “

Recommendations

Despite the carnage in cities such as Aden and Taiz, the government of Yemen has not taken steps to voice any support for the EWIPA declaration. The general public has little awareness of the declaration. As a first step:

- Yemeni Government, Saudi Arabia, and all members of the Saudi led coalition must show commitment on supporting EWIPA declaration, noting the extensive damage we have seen in Yemen and the need to spare civilians in the future
- The Yemeni Government all armed actors must proceed with addressing the risk of military bases in close proximity to homes

Recommendations

- Access to essential services must be part of joint planning between civil authorities and military command
- Plans must be made to rebuild damaged infostructure



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