

Yemen: Humanitarian Impact of Conflict in Amran



15 July 2014

Expected impact	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Important	Major
Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Important	Urgent

Crisis Overview

- After the failure of two ceasefires, fighting in Amran between Houthi fighters and government forces has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Amran is strategically located, just 50km away from the capital Sana'a.
- More than 70,000 people have been displaced as a result of the fighting, mostly within Amran governorate. Roadblocks prevent thousands of others from leaving the conflict zone.
- As of 4 July, indiscriminate night air raids have killed more than 200 civilians, including women and children.
- International humanitarian actors have not been able to deliver aid to Amran due to fighting, roadblocks and other restrictions.
- Access was already hampered prior to recent violence, making the area completely inaccessible.

Affected groups	Amran City	Yemen
Resident pop.	140,000	200,000
Total IDPs	70,000+	321,282
Killed & injured	200+	-
Estimated directly affected	85,000	-

Sources: (HRP 2014; OCHA 9/07/2014)

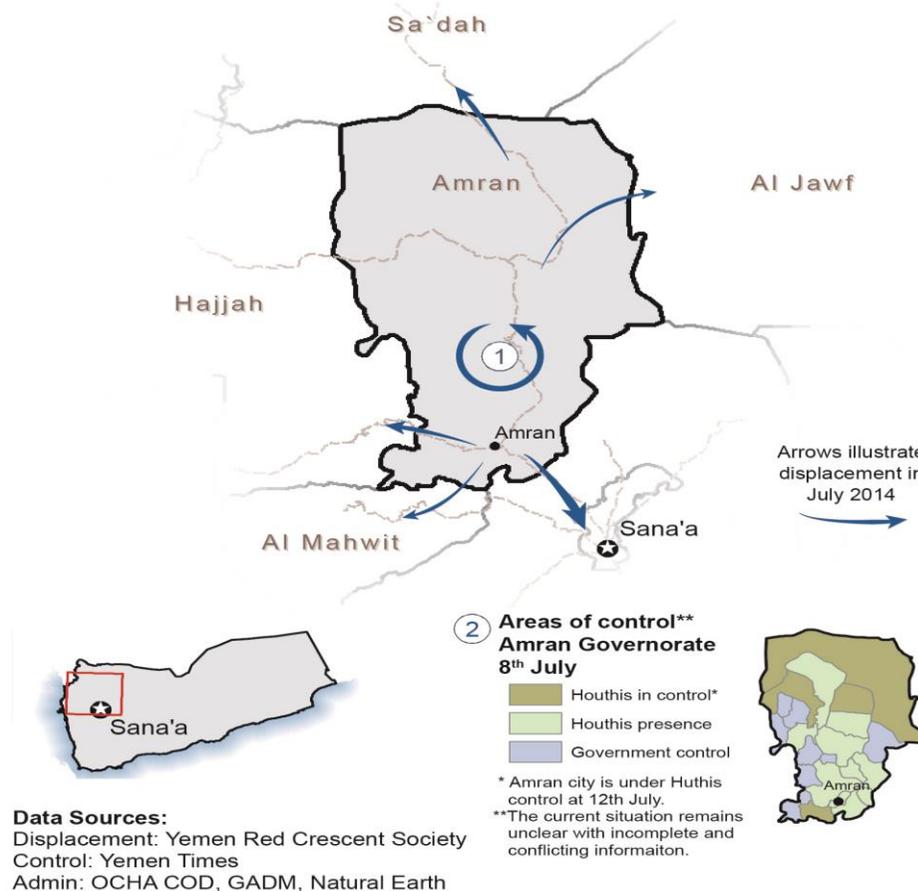
Key Findings

Anticipated scope and scale

85,000 people have been directly affected or displaced from Amran in recent weeks, with figures rising rapidly. At least 500,000 people could be affected in Amran governorate. Since the recent spike in violence, all humanitarian assistance has been put on hold in Amran.

Situation overview - Amran Governorate

- ① **Displacement:** As of the 7th July, 85,000 people are estimated to have been directly affected or displaced from Amran city, with up to 500,000 people affected in Amran governorate.
- ② **Control:** Houthis fought for Amran City on 8 July, causing thousands to flee their homes. As of the 12th July, they held control of the City. Following a unanimous UN Security Council call for them to leave, Houthi fighters pledged to leave Amran and allow an army unit to move in. There is as yet no confirmation that the Houthi have left Amran.



Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- Amran IDPs are in urgent need of food, shelter, protection, and access to safe water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare.
- Ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers is essential for the effective delivery of humanitarian aid.

Need for humanitarian assistance

- Lack of access has made the delivery of humanitarian aid impossible. No reliable information is available regarding the location and needs of IDPs, including protection, shelter, WASH, health and food security.
- On 18 June, eight humanitarian organisations operating in Amran warned of catastrophic consequences if the fighting continued and aid does not arrive quickly.

Humanitarian constraints

- As of 4 July, all humanitarian aid has been put on hold in Amran. Insecurity and violence are directly impacting humanitarian access and response, impeding independent verification of casualties, IDPs, and damage.
- Road blocks have prevented the delivery of aid.
- Schools, hospitals and government compounds have been directly targeted by violence and air strikes

Key Information

Amran has seen fierce fighting since February between Houthi insurgents and government forces. Two ceasefires have failed, violence has been escalating significantly over recent weeks (OCHA 9/07/2014). Houthi fighters took over Amran City on 8 July, causing thousands to flee their homes. As of 12 July, they held complete control of Amran (Al Jazeera 12/07/2014). Following a unanimous UN Security Council call for them to leave (UN 11/07/2014), Houthi fighters pledged to leave Amran and allow an army unit to move in. There is as yet no confirmation that the Houthi have left Amran (Yemen Times 10/07/2014).

As of 9 July, 85,000 people have been directly affected, including 70,000 people who have been displaced within Amran governorate, to Suwayr, Shaharah, Khamir, Kharif, As Sudah, As Sawed, Maswar, Habur Zulaymah and Al Qaflah Districts (OCHA 09/07/2014). The number of displaced is increasing daily (IFRC 09/07/2014). Thousands have arrived in Sana'a, with smaller numbers fleeing to Al Jawf, Hajjah, Sa'ada and Al'Mahwit governorates (OCHA 09/07/2014).

More than 200 civilians, including women and children, have been killed (OCHA 09/07/2014), with some witnesses reporting bodies littering the ground in Amran (Al Jazeera 09/07/2014). Preliminary estimates indicate that up to half a million people could be affected (OCHA 9/07/2014). Roadblocks have trapped many people within the conflict zone (OCHA 9/07/2014). IDPs are hiding in caves, schools, or deserted houses to avoid airstrikes (UN 20/06/2014).

Relevant Stakeholders

Houthis, or *Ansar Allah* (partisans of God) are a growing movement in Yemen. Since February, the Houthis have been advancing from Sa'ada towards Shi'ite-majority areas near Sana'a (ACAPS 07/07/2014). Their fight is mainly for political and religious freedoms, they currently oppose the Sunni-majority government. Other local tribes in Amran support the Houthi, including the disgruntled members of the Hashid and Bakil (Al Jazeera 09/07/2014).

The Huthis' opponents include the Ahmar family, Major General Ali Mohsen al Ahmar and his military allies, Salafi fighters, and Islah, the Sunni Islamist Party, and its affiliated tribes (Crisis Group 10/06/2014). In Amran, the Hashid tribal confederation are allied to the country's Muslim Brotherhood of the Islah party (Al Jazeera 09/07/2014).

Following a violent uprising in 2011, and the forced resignation of long-serving President Saleh, President Hadi is overseeing reforms in a US-supported political transition. Reforms include restructuring of the legislature to guarantee sufficient representation of both northern and southern insurgents. President Hadi's cabinet reshuffle has not addressed core issues, however, as it has not brought new groups into the government (ICG 07/2014; ACAPS 07/07/2014).

International and Neighbouring Countries' Relationship to the Conflict

Saudi Arabia launched a vast military offensive against the Houthi between 2004 and 2010, fearing Shi'ite control over states on its borders (Yemen Times 10/07/2014). Concern over Iran's backing of Houthi rebels, particularly military training and financing, has been voiced by opponents (Crisis Group 10/06/2014).

Since August 2013, US drone strikes have increased, causing mass protests. Country experts state that airstrikes have failed to curb militancy. International human rights groups reported that despite targeting militants, civilians are frequently killed.

Past Conflicts or Displacement

In April 2014, Yemen had 321,282 IDPs, located in five governorates: Sa'ada, Hajjah, Amran, Sana'a and Al Jawf. UNHCR verified a total of 63,832 IDPs in Amran governorate (OCHA 09/07/2014). In addition to economic challenges, it continues to face three concurrent security challenges: the presence of Houthi insurgents in the north; southern secessionists; and the increasing presence of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) throughout the country. Urban centres in western and central governorates have also seen civil unrest (ACAPS 07/07/2014).

Crisis Impact

Impact on Access of Affected Population to Essential Services

- **Food:** Recently displaced people are in need of food assistance. Rising food prices have affected people's ability to fend for themselves, leading to negative coping strategies (OCHA 09/07/2014) (IFRC 09/07/2014).
- **WASH:** Safe drinking water is a primary need for IDPs and conflict-affected households. 104 families sheltered in schools in Raydah district in Amran are in need of urgent WASH assistance (OCHA 09/07/2014).
- **Health:** Recent fighting has strained the capacity of hospital staff and depleted supplies of anaesthetics and surgical medications (USAID 30/06/2014). Fuel is also needed for critical functions (OCHA 09/07/2014).
- **Shelter:** Thousands of IDPs, as well as those whose houses have been damaged or destroyed are in need of shelter support (OCHA 09/07/2014).
- **Protection:** Women and children IDPs have been particularly affected if staying out in the open, and are in need of protection support (OCHA 09/07/2014).

Impact on Critical Infrastructure

- Direct targeting of schools, hospitals and government compounds. Nine schools and one hospital are being used as barracks or weapons storage by combatants (IFRC 09/07/2014; Yemen Times, 08/07/2014).
- The main road between Amran and Sana'a has been intermittently closed since 4 July (OCHA 09/07/2014), preventing thousands from fleeing the conflict zone.
- Damage to the rural water supply system in southern Amran, has stopped service to around 4,000 people (UNICEF 06/2014).

Affected Vulnerable Groups

- IDPs in Amran governorate are mainly from Raida, Atraf Aljabal, Al Ashmoor, Alsawda, Al Sood, Kharif and Khamir Districts (IFRC 09/07/2014). Many of those affected by the conflict are already vulnerable due to poverty, food insecurity and lack of access to basic services (OCHA 09/07/2014).
- At least nine children have reportedly been recruited and used by armed forces and groups. Several incidents of killing and maiming of children have been reported (UNICEF 06/2014).

Humanitarian and Operational Constraints

Access is very difficult, and humanitarian actors on the ground have not been able to intervene due to limited amount of information available (IFRC 09/07/2014). Insecurity and lack of access are preventing independent verification of number of people affected

and displaced (OCHA 09/07/2014). Humanitarian workers have reportedly been detained and harassed (OCHA 09/07/2014).

Potential Aggravating Factors

- Yemen has been struggling with political instability and an economic crisis since 2011 (USAID 30/06/2014).
- Insecurity on the roads and fuel shortages have pushed up the prices of key commodities by 30% in recent weeks (UN 20/06/2014), and prices of staple food increased 50–100% between May and June 2014 (FEWS 06/2014).
- Fuel shortages have affected the ability of the host population to cater for themselves, as well as humanitarian actors' ability to assist.

Key Characteristics of Host Population and Area

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab region, and seventh most food insecure country in the world (WFP 15/06/2014).

- **Demographic profile:** 25.2 million people reside in Yemen, of whom 14.7m are in need of humanitarian assistance (WFP 15/06/2014). Amran City is home to an estimated 140,000 people (OCHA 09/07/2014).
- **WASH:** 13.1 million do not have access to safe drinking water (USAID 30/06/2014), 12.1 million do not have access to improved sanitation and 4.4 million lack access to adequate sanitation (ACAPS 07/07/2014). Open defecation remains the practice for 20% of the population (UNICEF, 2014).
- **Health statistics:** infant mortality rate: 46/1,000; life expectancy at birth: 63; maternal mortality rate 148/100,000 live births (UNICEF)
- **Food insecurity:** 10.5 million (42% of the population) are food insecure. Acute food insecurity will continue to be at Crisis level (IPC Phase 3) through September (WFP 15/06/2014).
- **Nutrition:** 1 million people suffer from acute malnutrition (USAID 30/06/2014); 47% of children under 5 are stunted (WFP 15/06/2014). In some places, 1 in 3 children is malnourished (OCHA).
- **Literacy rate:** 65.3%

Response Capacity

Local and National Response Capacity

Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS), Government IDP Executive Unit, Ministry of Education, Government's Executive Unit for IDPs and the Ministry of Public Health and

Population (WFP 15/06/2014), Bureau for Refugees Affairs, Immigration and Passport Authority, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Ministry of Interior, National Committee for Refugee Affairs (NACRA/NASCRA), as well as a variety of national NGOs (UNHCR 12/2013).

International Response Capacity

IFRC, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, OPM, USAID, ACTED, FAO, IRC, IRD, WHO, IMC, Save the Children, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Al-Amel Charitable Community for Social Welfare, Albena, Association for Developing People with Special Needs, Danish Refugee Council, Interaction in Development Foundation, International Relief and Development, ITERSOS, Islamic Relief, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Rageeg, Save the Children Sweden, Society for Humanitarian Solidarity and Solidarity Association for Development (At Tadamon) (UNHCR 12/2013).

Information Gaps and Needs

Verifying information and needs is almost impossible at this stage.

The main information needs include: location of IDPs and conflict-affected households; IDP identification and verification; response efforts; monitoring of protection violations; identification of health, WASH, and food security needs.

As access is made available, a multi-sector needs assessment must be carried out.

Lessons Learned

In August 2008, similar fighting between government forces and Shi'ite rebels displaced 10,000-12,000 people from Amran governorate. At the time, the major concerns included shelter, as IDPs sought shelter in abandoned buildings, schools or mosques. Diarrhoeal diseases were common. Lack of proper coordination and ensuring safety of humanitarian workers were the main challenges at the time (IRIN, 18/08/2008).