UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Food Insecurity In Yemen - WFP

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Shotlist

2. Wide shot, Press room at the UN Palais
3. SOUNDbite (English) – Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “The humanitarian situation in Yemen is deteriorating at an alarming rate. We must act now. If we wait for the famine to be declared, it will be already too late and people will already be dying”.
4. Medium shot, journalist and spokesperson
5. Exterior shot, Palais des Nations with UN lettering and logo
6. SOUNDbite (English) – Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “WFP has had to reduce emergency food assistance at a time when Yemen needs it most. We may have to reduce further. WFP needs 737 million USD to the end of the year to keep this vital safety net for the millions in Yemen who rely on humanitarian assistance to survive”.
7. Medium shot, journalists in Press Room
8. SOUNDbite (English) – Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “Nearly 10 million people in Yemen are acutely food insecure. They face a daily struggle to find enough food and it is extremely difficult for them to stay at home. This is a situation we are seeing in many countries with large numbers of daily wage laborers. Just over 20 million people in Yemen are food insecure of which 13 million, I repeat, receive humanitarian food assistance”.
9. Close up, journalist
10. SOUNDbite (English) – Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “
We have those 2 million children requiring a treatment for malnutrition. Of course, we continue to treat them, and we are quite concerned about the 360,000 children who would be at risk of dying without treatment. That is why this funding is badly needed. We just need those 200 million dollars every month to continue.”

11. Close up, hands writing
12. SOUNDBITE (French) - Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “C’est une situation extrêmement alarmante et nous espérons, si vous voulez, avec ce cri d’alarme raviver l’intérêt des bailleurs de fonds et qu’ils réagissent et qu’ils comprennent l’urgence de la situation. Il faut agir maintenant, maintenant quand les clignotants sont en rouge, éviter qu’on tombe dans une situation où il faudrait encore plus doubler les opérations où déjà les personnes commencerait à mourir de faim ».

"This is an extremely alarming situation and we hope that with this alarm bell to revive the interest of the donors and that they react and understand the urgency of the situation. We must act now, now when the indicators are red in order to avoid falling into a situation where we would have to double operations or where people are already starting to starve to death."

13. Wide shot, empty chairs in press room
14. Medium shot, journalists
15. Medium shot, journalist with spokespersons
Covid-19, war and hunger – Yemen’s humanitarian food crisis is becoming worse, warns the World Food Programme (WFP)

As Yemen is facing an escalation of fighting and coronavirus is sweeping across the country, the World Food Programme (WFP) today sounded alarm that “the humanitarian situation in Yemen is deteriorating at an alarming rate”, calling donors for an urgent appeal to fund its life-saving operations in the country. WFP needs US$ 737 million to the end of the year to keep their humanitarian work ongoing.

Speaking today to a virtual press conference at the United Nations in Geneva, WFP’s spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs said that “we must act now. If we wait for the famine to be declared, it will be already too late and people will already be dying”.

A five year long violent conflict between a Saudi-led international coalition supporting President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and Houthi rebels which has left over 100,000 dead in Yemen is widely described as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

According to Elisabeth Byrs, “WFP has had to reduce emergency food assistance at a time when Yemen needs it most. We may have to reduce further”. She added that “WFP needs US$ 737 million to the end of the year to keep this vital safety net for the millions in Yemen who rely on humanitarian assistance to survive”.

Yemen is spiralling into an economic crisis leading to reductions in food supply, soaring food prices and a rapid escalation in food insecurity. The Yemeni Riyal has lost 17 percent of its values since the beginning of the year. These economic factors have a very immediate and direct impact on vulnerable Yemenis. When families cannot afford to buy food, they reduce the number of meals and the diversity of food.

“Nearly 10 million people in Yemen are acutely food insecure. They face a daily struggle to find enough food and it is extremely difficult for them to stay at home”, Elisabeth Byrs said. “This is a situation we are seeing in many countries with large numbers of daily wage laborers. Just over 20 million people in Yemen are food insecure of which 13 million, I repeat, receive humanitarian food assistance”.

WFP started distributing food assistance on alternate months in some parts of Yemen in April to stretch the limited resources. If funding is not coming in, WFP may have to reduce the prevention programme to all children under age 2 and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

“We have those 2 million children requiring a treatment for malnutrition. Of course, we continue to treat them, and we are quite concerned about the 360 000 children who would be at risk of dying without treatment. That is why this funding is badly needed. We just need those 200 million dollars every month to continue”, WFP’s Elisabeth Byrs said.

The Covid-19 pandemic is having a very real impact on WFP’s operations in Yemen. Movement restrictions, curfews, and a 14-day quarantine period introduced to vessels at the ports of Hodeida and Saleef are creating delays in WFP’s food assistance supply chain. An additional vessel was chartered to catch up with these delays.

"This is an extremely alarming situation and we hope that with this alarm bell to revive the interest of the donors and that they react and understand the urgency of the situation”, said Elisabeth Byrs. “We must act now, now when the indicators are red in order to avoid falling into a situation where we would have to double operations or where people are already starting to starve to death."

According to WFP, after five years of conflict, the country is left with 3.65 million internally displaced people. Less than half of Yemen’s health facilities are fully functioning, nearly half of all children are
stunted by malnutrition.