



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Yemen Displacement COVID-19 - IOM

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, sunny, flags fluttering.
2. Wide shot, UN Geneva Press room III, podium speakers and a single journalist in shot.
3. Close-up, UN Geneva Press room III, journalists faces in profile, one is wearing a facemask.
4. **SOUNDBITE (English) – Paul Dillon, spokesperson, IOM: “The International Organization for Migration’s Displacement Tracking Matrix reports that more than 100,000 people have been forced to flee due to fighting and insecurity since January. And between 30 March to 18 July however, DTM recorded over 10,000 people citing fear of contracting the virus and the impact of the outbreak on services and the economy as their as reasons for moving.”**
5. Medium shot, a loose line of migrant women walking across scrubland and carrying IOM aid and jerrycan and washbasin at a makeshift settlement in Taizz.
6. **SOUNDBITE (English) – Paul Dillon, spokesperson, IOM: “The situation is especially dire in places like Aden where hospitals are turning away suspected cases and news reports have shown large numbers of graves being dug.”**
7. Medium shot, IOM staff worker packing aid items for displaced people in Lahj.
8. **SOUNDBITE (English) – Paul Dillon, spokesperson, IOM: “Access constraints are having a knock-on effect on operations but we are continuing to deliver, for example, medical assistance and materials to people who are living rough, whether they be migrants or internally displaced people within Yemen. So that’s a major focus of what we’ve been doing.”**

9. Wide shot, boy sitting by jerrycans waiting to fill them with water in Taizz; water tower in rear of shot and tents.
10. **SOUNDBITE (English) – Paul Dillon, spokesperson, IOM: “A woman named Salam in Aden told our staff about people selling their mattresses, blankets and children’s clothing in order to meet their basic needs. Displaced women who used to work as maids are forced to beg in the streets because potential employers are afraid they’re carrying the virus.”**
11. Medium shot, patient consulting a doctor at a health clinic in Aden.
12. **SOUNDBITE (English) – Paul Dillon, spokesperson, IOM: “One of the drivers, I think, one of the key concerns that we have and one that’s shared by the humanitarian community not just in Yemen but elsewhere, of course, is the emergence of these false narratives about COVID-19; false information that’s been circulated in different areas about the virus and the emerging and very clear examples of xenophobia and xenophobic attacks being directed at displaced people.”**
13. Medium shot, doctor examining a patient in a health clinic in Aden.
14. Medium shot, TV camera operators, UN Geneva Press room III.
15. Close-up, rear of journalist’s head (blurred), another journalist is seated across the room, UN Geneva Press room III.
16. Close-up, journalist’s hands typing on laptop, UN Geneva Press room III.

Story

COVID-19 scapegoating triggers fresh displacement in Yemen, warns migration agency

Fresh reports have emerged that COVID-19 has prompted fresh displacement in war-torn Yemen and forcing those on the move to sell what little they have to survive, UN humanitarians said on Tuesday.

From the end of March to 18 July, more than 10,000 people interviewed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), cited “fear of infection and the impact of the outbreak on services and the economy” as their reasons for leaving virus hotspots.

“A woman named Salam in Aden told our staff about people selling their mattresses, blankets and children’s clothing in order to meet their basic needs,” spokesperson Paul Dillon told journalists in Geneva. “Displaced women who used to work as maids are forced to beg in the streets because potential employers are afraid they’re carrying the virus.”

Following interviews with displaced individuals, IOM said that some were travelling from Aden and Lahj to areas within the same governorates less affected by the outbreak; others were going to districts in Abyan despite active fighting in other parts of the governorate.

“One of the key concerns that we have and one that’s shared by the humanitarian community not just in Yemen but elsewhere, of course, is the emergence of these false narratives about COVID-19,” Mr. Dillon said. “False information that’s been circulated in different areas about the virus and the emerging and very clear examples of xenophobia and xenophobic attacks being directed at displaced people.”

Latest data from IOM’s Data Tracking Matrix indicates that “more than 100,000 people have been forced to flee due to fighting and insecurity since January” amid ongoing violence linked to the country’s conflict, which is well into its sixth year, Mr. Dillon continued.

The actual number of displaced people is likely to be higher, he added, as data is only being collected in 12 of 22 governorates amid access restrictions, while many of those displaced because of the pandemic were moving for the “second, third or fourth time”.

Although the official number of COVID-19 infections in Yemen remains low, it is widely believed that the actual number is much higher after the first cases were identified in April, given limited testing capacity and concerns among the local population about seeking treatment.

Mr. Dillon highlighted that around half the war-torn nation’s health facilities have been forced to close or damaged since conflict escalated in March 2015 between the forces of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi - supported by a Saudi-led international coalition – and mainly Houthi militia, for control of the Arab nation.

“The situation is especially dire in places like Aden where hospitals are turning away suspected cases and news reports have shown large numbers of graves being dug,” he explained.

Widely described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, around eight in 10 people in Yemen need of humanitarian assistance, according to IOM.

To date, its \$155 million appeal for funding from April to December to provide comprehensive assistance to around five million people is around 50 per cent funded.

The organization’s humanitarian activities are made possible through nine mobile health and protection teams and 36 health facilities across the country and in 63 sites for displaced people.

“Access constraints are having a knock-on effect on operations but we are continuing to deliver, for example, medical assistance and materials to people who are living rough, whether they be migrants or internally displaced people within Yemen. So that’s a major focus of what we’ve been doing,” Mr. Dillon said.