



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Thirty-fourth session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by the Child Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[06 February 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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## Malnutrition and health crisis in Yemen

The civil war in Yemen has now continued on for almost 2 years. While many are still hopeful that a settlement will soon come, the damage that has already been done in the Arab world's poorest country has left millions of Yemenis in dire need of humanitarian aid. Of the millions in need, nearly 2.2 million are young children. In the first year alone, almost 900, or 1/3, of the civilians killed were children. Unfortunately, the future is unclear for these young ones, and even if the war soon comes to an end, problems such as malnutrition and lack of health care will continue to plague future generations.

According to UNICEF, 370,000 children currently face severe malnutrition. Since 2014, statistics show that reported cases of severe acute malnutrition have increased by almost 200%. Despite recent humanitarian efforts, it seems as though this situation may only continue to decline. Currently facing challenges with obtaining lines of credit, it is believed that in coming months wheat importers may begin to decrease or stop their shipments all together. With 90% of all Yemen's cereal supplies obtained through imports, this could only worsen the country's current state of malnutrition. Additionally, with many ports and airports continually shutting down, it is only becoming more and more difficult to import necessary supplies, including food. These many problems which are threatening the majority of the country's livelihoods are unacceptable and must be addressed immediately. It is crucial that the bulk of humanitarian aid is focused on providing food and other nutrition to those who need it most, such as young children and pregnant or lactating women. In order to begin the healing process of this broken system, it is crucial that some sort of agreement is made between the warring parties that allows access to the large groups of people who are not currently reachable due to their location within active conflict zones.

Statistics show that 1 in 2 Yemenis don't have access to clean drinking water. In the last few months, the government confirmed a cholera outbreak which proved to be an increased risk for young children. With 14,121 expected cases of Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) or cholera (173 of which were confirmed cases of cholera) across multiple governorates, it has been recognized that the potential for a massive outbreak is on the horizon. Toward the end of 2016, this problem was addressed by a variety of humanitarian organizations which was helpful in containing the spread of the often fatal disease, but it is crucial that health and sanitation knowledge is continually passed on to individuals in affected areas. Specifically, those facing the highest risks are internally displaced persons and those residing in urban locations. By sharing methods of prevention and continually working on repairing Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) systems, as a community, we have the ability to protect children and other individuals from the spread of cholera and other waterborne illnesses.

One of the other huge issues affecting children in Yemen is the spread of preventable diseases. Despite the constant advancements in modern medicine, the continued conflict and closing of ports as well as other means of importing crucial supplies has made it next to impossible to provide necessary health care. Among these supplies, the most important yet under administered comes in the form of vaccines. Children under the age of 5 are continuing to die at unprecedented rates due to illnesses such as polio that can easily be prevented. It is crucial that in coming years NGOs and other humanitarian organizations focus on providing necessary vaccinations to the youngest portion of the population. In order to ensure that this type of health care reaches all areas of Yemen, including those in conflict zones, it is crucial that bombings and other attacks on hospitals and health care centers cease immediately. Over the last two years, hundreds of hospitals have been closed as a result of direct attacks and their unfortunate locations within violent conflict areas. We must consider these attacks to be among some of the highest crimes and enforce punishments that fit these horrendous acts. Additionally, it is crucial that we work toward reopening airports and ports which have been closed since the conflict began in order to provide easier routes for importing necessary health care supplies.

Though the survival and wellbeing of the Yemeni people must come first, it is important that we do not turn our backs on education and the psychosocial well being of young children. The instability and violent conflict that plagues this region has had a variety of lasting negative impacts on this group. According to UNICEF, since the conflict began, the number of out of school children in the country has increased to over 2 million. This unreasonably high number partially comes as a result of school closures, which are often due to the institution's proximity to conflict zones. It is important that this problem is addressed in order to continue the necessary education of the Yemeni children. Schools

provide an opportunity to escape tough situations such as these, and they also allow for a strong platform to educate children on methods of maintaining the health of their bodies and minds.

Psychosocial education is among the services that are currently growing throughout the Yemeni education system. With the help of the Ministry of Education and humanitarian organizations, hundreds of schoolteachers are being trained to deal with the psychological problems that develop from witnessing the type of chaos that currently exists within the borders of Yemen. It is extremely important that these efforts continue in order to assist children who are dealing with the repercussions of prolonged instability, violence, displacement, and other crimes against youth, such as child marriage. Along with education, these programs have the ability to bring a sense of normalcy back into the lives of children.

Overall, the unstable situation in Yemen has created a breeding ground for disease and malnutrition. It is crucial that in the coming year humanitarian aid is focused on dealing with issues pertaining to the survival and well being of young children throughout Yemen. In order to accomplish this, our community must work toward finding solutions for easing the complicated import process, which will in-turn assist in solving the malnutrition and health crisis that plague the divided country of Yemen.

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