

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 1000 GMT (0600 IN NEW YORK / 1100 IN LONDON / 1300 IN SANAA)
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24**

YEMEN: Civilian casualties soar in Hodeidah since devastating offensive that began in June

As world leaders gather in New York for the UN General Assembly, Save the Children is warning that the battle for the strategic port city is endangering the lives of thousands of children

Stills and case studies from Hodeidah & Saada available [here](#)

Hodeidah, September 24 – There’s been a dramatic increase in the killing and maiming of hundreds of civilians, including children, in Yemen’s Hodeidah governorate as a direct result of the increased fighting in that part of the country over the past three months.

According to monitoring group [ACLED](#) (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data), Hodeidah accounted for 51 per cent of all civilian casualties in Yemen between June and August this year. During that three-month period there were at least 349 civilian deaths, with a national total of 685 civilians killed.

In the first five months of this year (January-May) there were an average of 44 civilian casualties every month in Hodeidah. The subsequent three months (June-August) saw the figure jump to a monthly average of 116 – an increase of 164 per cent. This is in line with a renewed [offensive](#) in June by the Saudi- & Emirati-led Coalition to retake Hodeidah and its port.

Our field teams are meeting children who have suffered severe and life-changing injuries caused by explosive weapons, from airstrikes to landmines. Treating these injuries is particularly challenging in Yemen, where the health system has all but collapsed, prosthetics are hard to come by and there are few surgeons trained to treat traumatic injuries.

As world leaders gather in New York for the UN General Assembly, the international community has a unique window of opportunity to stand up for Yemeni children and indeed, children in conflict everywhere, who need protection.

Hodeidah and its vital port are currently controlled by the Houthis but the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition has been trying to wrestle back control over this strategic city over the past few months. This has led to a marked increase in attacks on civilians.

There has been more than a three-fold (342 per cent) increase in verified civilian casualties in Hodeidah over the past two years, with 129 recorded in 2016 to 571 in just the first eight months of this year (January-August). The actual civilian death toll is likely to be higher as many deaths go unreported and based on current trends many more civilians are likely to die before the end of the year. In July and August alone at least [100 children were killed](#) across Yemen.

Speaking from Sanaa, Tamer Kirolos, Yemen Country Director, Save the Children, said:

“We know that children are particularly vulnerable when explosive weapons like missiles and mortars hit populated areas, including towns and cities, markets, schools and hospitals. Their smaller bodies mean they’re more likely to have injuries to the head and neck, shrapnel is more likely to hit their vital organs and they have less blood to lose than adults. It’s difficult for the world to hear but it’s the stark reality for a child living in Yemen right now.”

“Thousands of children have lost their arms or legs or the ability to speak or walk as a result of explosive weapons. Health facilities in Yemen just aren’t equipped to treat these kinds of injuries. These traumatic incidents can affect a child for the rest of their life. The warring parties must come to the negotiating table to help end the suffering of Yemeni children. They can start by ending the use of explosive weapons in populated areas so children aren’t at risk of death or injury as they go about their daily lives.”

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, CEO of Save the Children International has recently returned from a trip to Yemen, visiting children and families affected by the war there.

Speaking from the United Nations in New York, Ms Thorning-Schmidt said:

“As world leaders meet this week for the UN General Assembly, we are urging them to use their voice to defend international humanitarian law and be clear that violations will not be tolerated. When children are targeted and killed or when hunger is used as a weapon of war, the world must speak out and do everything in its power to hold those responsible to account. Time is running out for the children I met in Yemen.”

“In the past few months we’ve seen a shocking spike in violence - from an airstrike that hit a school bus full of children to a bombing near a hospital. Battles are being fought in densely populated urban areas and children end up trapped on the frontline, risking death or life-changing injuries. Attacks on schools and hospitals are up – safe spaces that should never be targeted. This is a War on Children. The world seems to be accepting an outrageous disregard for the conventions of war, and children are paying the price. It’s shocking that in the 21st Century we are retreating on a principle that is so simple – children should be protected.

“The international community gathered here in New York needs to put pressure on the warring parties in Yemen to come to the negotiating table in good faith and agree to a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire. Ultimately, only a political solution can end this crisis.”

ENDS

SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE IN HODEIDAH, NEW YORK, LONDON AND AMMAN

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CASE STUDIES

<https://www.contenthubsavethechildren.org/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ALID=204C2SGNWUMG>



***AHMAD**

Last month 15-year-old *Ahmad from Hodeidah was working in a fish market to help support his family when airstrikes in the area left him badly injured in his leg and arm. *Ahmed survived the first missile and was helping an injured man to an ambulance when the second missile that followed struck him. After losing a lot of blood and falling into a coma *Ahmad is now recovering but is still not been able to walk.

***Ahmad said:**

“The blood was everywhere; it was a horrible scene I will never forget. I did not expect that the fish market would be targeted by the airstrikes. I always feel safe there but the airstrikes surprised me. When I was lying in the hospital I was thinking of my family and death. I was told that my friend who was selling water in the market was killed. A piece of shrapnel cut his head open while he was trying to escape. My friend Hisham was only selling water in the market to help his family, just like me.”



***IMAN**

*Iman is six years old and lives in Hodeidah with her parents and six siblings. Three months ago she was playing in her backyard when an airstrike hit her neighbour’s house. Shrapnel from the attack severely injured her neck, hand, and leg. *Iman’s father, *Salem, was coming home from work when he saw smoke billowing up from his house. He immediately ran home to find *Iman lying on the ground, covered in blood.

***Iman said:**

“The airstrike happened when I was playing with my younger brother in the garden. I felt a sudden pain in my neck and heard a terrible sound. Luckily the others were inside the house so weren’t injured like I was. When I grow up I want to be a teacher but for now I just wish the war would end.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

- [ACLED](#) reports fatalities only when a reputable source has relayed that information. When and where possible, ACLED researchers seek out information to triangulate the numbers from any report. To avoid inflating reported violence, ACLED uses the most conservative fatality estimate available. Because ACLED treats civilians as unarmed, non-combatants, the number of fatalities reported for each event involving civilians is taken to be the reported number of civilians killed (unless the perpetrator dies as a result of his action, like a suicide bomber). As such, estimates of civilian fatalities do not include civilians that may have died during fighting between armed groups or as a result of the remote targeting of armed groups (e.g. an airstrike hitting militant positions). For more information on methodology please visit: <https://www.acleddata.com/resources/methodology/>
- The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is widely acknowledged as the worst in the world. 60 per cent of the country's population is hungry, including 8.4 million acutely food insecure people who do not know where their next meal will come from and an additional 10 million people who could slip into pre-famine conditions by the end of year unless the conflict ends. At least 1.8 million children and 1.1 million pregnant or breastfeeding women are acutely malnourished, including 400,000 children under the age of five who are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.
- Save the Children has over 50 years of experience working in Yemen. Operational since 1963, the charity was the first international aid group in Yemen. We work nationally and locally to promote and protect children's rights, with programmes in education, protection, health, nutrition, water, livelihoods, and food security. More information [here](#).