



## AS IT IS

# In Yemen, Poverty, Hunger as UN Pleads for Funds and War's End

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Ahmed Farea sold everything he owned to feed and take care of his two young daughters. The Yemeni father and husband has been unable to find work in the capital, Sanaa.

Also in Sanaa, Mona Muhammad has a job but struggles to buy enough food for her four children. Muhammad, whose husband died, cannot buy anything other than rice because of high costs.

And in a nearby hospital, severely **malnourished** children receive lifesaving drinks filled with nutrients.

Yemenis are living through the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Children across the country are starving from a famine most consider man-made.

On Monday, the United Nations held an online **fundraiser** conference with a target of raising \$3.85 billion. However, financial promises from donor countries fell short by more than \$2 billion. The effort raised a total of \$1.7 billion.

After the conference ended, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the promised amounts as "disappointing." The International Rescue Committee called the amount "a failure of humanity."

Yemen was a poor country with a child hunger problem even before the six-year war. The economic cost of the war has been deadly. Imports were stopped or delayed, people lost their homes, government services collapsed and jobs were lost. Then COVID-19 hit. The pandemic has affected **remittances** from family members in other countries, which many Yemenis badly need.

“I want the war to stop so we can go back to how we were ... We could buy what we wanted and could feed our children,” Mona Muhammad said.

Ahmed Farea’s work in the building trade ended after political problems grew following Yemen’s 2011 uprising, he said.

“Since the war and the **blockade** started, and work stopped, I can’t buy anything anymore. Where am I supposed to get it from?” said Farea. He uses containers to collect clean water from a neighborhood source for poor people.

“I sleep all morning and then have lunch at noon from whatever God supplies and that covers the rest of the day,” he said.

### ‘Unimaginably cruel’

As needs have risen in the past year, aid has decreased. The U.N. has been forced to close some assistance programs and decrease others.

**Famine** has never been made official in Yemen. But areas with famine have recently appeared for the first time in two years, the U.N said.

In 2018 and 2019, the U.N. was able to help Yemen avoid a famine because of a strongly supported aid appeal. But in 2020, the U.N. received only about 50 percent of the \$3.4 billion it needed.

Jan Egeland is secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council. On a recent visit to Yemen, he said, “What is happening to the people is unimaginably cruel...the parties to this senseless war specialize in producing suffering and the weapon of choice is hunger.”

There has been a renewed push by the U.N. and the United States for a negotiated end to the war. Experts describe the war as a proxy -- or indirect -- conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

American President Joe Biden has declared an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign and has said Yemen is a **priority** for his administration.

I'm Susan Shand.

*The Reuters News Agency reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**remittance** – *n.* an amount of money that is sent as a payment for something

**widow** – *n.* a married woman whose husband has died

**blockade** – *n.* an act of war in which one country uses ships to stop people or supplies from entering or leaving another country

**cruel** – *adj.* used to describe people who hurt others and do not feel sorry about it

**famine** – *n.* a situation in which many people do not have enough food to eat

**malnourished** – *adj.* not eating enough food or not eating enough healthy food

**priority** – *n.* something that is more important than other things and that needs to be done or dealt with first

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