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P8_TA(2016)0066

Humanitarian situation in Yemen

European Parliament resolution of 25 February 2016 on the humanitarian situation in Yemen (2016/2515(RSP))

(2018/C 035/25)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Yemen, in particular that of 9 July 2015 on the situation in Yemen ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 10 January 2016 by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, on the attack on a Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) (MSF) health centre in Yemen,
 - having regard to the statement of 15 December 2015 by the European External Action Service (EEAS) spokesperson on the resumption of UN-facilitated talks on Yemen, and to the joint statement of 2 October 2015 by the VP/HR, Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, on Yemen,
 - having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Yemen, in particular those of 20 April 2015,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen, in particular resolutions 2216 (2015), 2201 (2015) and 2140 (2014),
 - having regard to the statements of 10 January 2016 and 8 January 2016 attributable to the spokesman for the UN Secretary-General on Yemen,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the current crisis in Yemen is the result of a failure by successive governments to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people for democracy, economic and social development, stability and security; whereas this failure has created the conditions for an outbreak of violent conflict by failing to establish an inclusive government and fair power-sharing, and systematically ignoring the country's many tribal tensions, widespread insecurity and economic paralysis;
- B. whereas the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, requested by Yemen's President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, including the use of internationally banned cluster bombs, has led to a disastrous humanitarian situation that affects the population across the country, has serious implications for the region and constitutes a threat to international peace and security; whereas members of Yemen's civilian population, already affected by dire living conditions, are the first victims of the current military escalation;
- C. whereas Houthi rebels have laid siege to the town of Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid; whereas, according to Stephen O'Brien, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, some 200 000 civilians trapped there were in dire need of drinking water, food, medical treatment and other life-saving assistance and protection;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0270.

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- D. whereas since the start of the conflict at least 5 979 people have been killed, almost half of them civilians, and 28 208 injured; whereas there are hundreds of women and children among the victims; whereas the humanitarian impact on the civilian population of the ongoing fighting between various militias, bombardments and the disruption of essential services is reaching alarming proportions;
- E. whereas, according to the 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) released in November 2015, 21,2 million people (82 % of the population) are now in need of some form of humanitarian assistance; whereas, similarly, nearly 2,1 million people are currently estimated to be malnourished, including more than 1,3 million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition;
- F. whereas the EU provided for EUR 52 million in new humanitarian aid for the crisis in Yemen and its impact in the Horn of Africa in 2015; whereas the EU will provide up to EUR 2 million for the establishment of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) for commercial shipping to Yemen, thus facilitating the unimpeded flow of commercial items and humanitarian aid to Yemen;
- G. whereas there are multiple reports that airstrikes by the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen have hit civilian targets, including hospitals, schools, markets, grain warehouses, ports and a camp for displaced persons, severely damaging essential infrastructure for the delivery of aid and contributing to the severe food and fuel shortages in the country; whereas a hospital in northern Yemen supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) (MSF) was bombed on 10 January 2016, resulting in at least six people being killed, a dozen being injured, including MSF staff, and severe damage to medical facilities; whereas this is the latest in a series of attacks on health facilities; whereas many historic monuments and archaeological sites have also been irreparably damaged or destroyed, including parts of the Old City of Sana'a, a UNESCO World Heritage site;
- H. whereas, owing to reduced port capacity and the congestion resulting from damaged infrastructure and facilities, only 15 % of the pre-crisis volume of fuel imports is getting through to the country; whereas, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), eight governorates are currently classified at emergency level for food security, namely Sa'ada, Hajjah, Hodeida, Taiz, Al-Dhale, Lahj, Abyan and Hadramaut;
- I. whereas, according to Save the Children, hospitals in at least 18 of the country's 22 governorates have been closed as a result of, or severely affected by, the fighting or the lack of fuel; whereas, in particular, 153 health centres that previously supplied nutrition to more than 450 000 at-risk children have closed down, together with 158 outpatient clinics responsible for providing basic healthcare to nearly half a million children under the age of five;
- J. whereas, according to UNICEF, the conflict in Yemen has also had a severe impact on children's access to education, which has come to a standstill for nearly 2 million children, with 3 584 schools — or one in four — having been shut down; whereas 860 of these schools are damaged or sheltering the displaced;
- K. whereas a nationwide ceasefire was declared on 15 December 2015 but has subsequently been widely violated; whereas peace talks held by the warring parties in Switzerland in mid-December 2015 failed to produce any major breakthrough with a view to ending the conflict; whereas the resumption of the UN-led peace talks under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, which was scheduled for 14 January 2016, has been temporarily postponed amid continued violence;

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- L. whereas the situation in Yemen carries grave risks for the stability of the region, in particular that of the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the wider Middle East; whereas Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been able to benefit from the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen, expanding its presence and augmenting the number and scale of its terrorist attacks; whereas the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) / Daesh has established its presence in Yemen and carried out terrorist attacks against Shiite mosques, killing hundreds of people;
- M. whereas a stable, secure Yemen with a properly functioning government is critical to international efforts to combat extremism and violence in the region and beyond, as well as to peace and stability within Yemen itself;
- N. whereas some EU Member States have continued to authorise transfers of weapons and related items to Saudi Arabia since the war started; whereas such transfers are in violation of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on arms export control, which explicitly rules out the authorising of arms licences by Member States if there is a clear risk that the military technology or equipment to be exported might be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law and to undermine regional peace, security and stability;
1. Expresses grave concern at the alarming deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is characterised by widespread food insecurity and severe malnutrition, indiscriminate attacks against civilians and medical and aid workers, the destruction of civilian and medical infrastructure as a result of the pre-existing domestic conflict, the intensification of airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition, ground fighting and shelling, despite repeated calls for a renewed cessation of hostilities; deeply regrets the loss of life caused by the conflict and the suffering of those caught up in the fighting, and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims; reaffirms its commitment to continuing to support Yemen and the Yemeni people;
 2. Expresses grave concern at the airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition and the naval blockade it has imposed on Yemen, which have led to thousands of deaths, have further destabilised Yemen, are destroying the country's physical infrastructure, have created instability which has been exploited by terrorist and extremist organisations such as ISIS/Daesh and AQAP, and have exacerbated an already critical humanitarian situation; strongly condemns, also, the destabilising and violent actions taken by the Houthis, who are supported by Iran, including the siege of the city of Taiz, which has also had disastrous humanitarian consequences for its inhabitants;
 3. Stresses the need for coordinated humanitarian action under UN leadership, and urges all countries to contribute to addressing humanitarian needs; urges all parties to allow the entry and delivery of urgently needed food, medicine, fuel and other necessary assistance through UN and international humanitarian channels in order to address the urgent needs of civilians affected by the crisis, in accordance with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence; calls for a humanitarian pause to allow life-saving assistance to reach the Yemeni people as a matter of urgency; recalls that it is therefore essential that commercial shipping access to Yemen be further eased;
 4. Calls on all sides to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to ensure the protection of civilians and to refrain from directly targeting civilian infrastructure, in particular medical facilities and water systems; demands an independent investigation into all allegations of abuse, torture, targeted killing of civilians and other violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law;
 5. Reminds all parties that hospitals and medical personnel are explicitly protected under international humanitarian law and that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure amounts to a war crime; calls for an impartial and independent investigation into all alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including the latest attacks targeting humanitarian infrastructure and personnel; calls on all parties to respect the human rights and freedoms of all Yemeni citizens, and stresses the importance of improving the security of all those working on peace and humanitarian missions in the country, including aid workers, doctors and journalists;

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6. Calls for the EU to effectively promote compliance with international humanitarian law, as provided for in the relevant EU guidelines; stresses, in particular, the need for the EU to raise, in its political dialogue with Saudi Arabia, the necessity of complying with international humanitarian law, and, in the event that such dialogue yields no results, to consider other measures in accordance with the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law;
 7. Calls on the VP/HR to launch an initiative aimed at imposing an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, given the serious allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia in Yemen and the fact that the continued licensing of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia would therefore be in breach of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008;
 8. Believes that Saudi Arabia and Iran are instrumental in resolving the crisis, and urges both sides to work pragmatically and in good faith to end the fighting in Yemen;
 9. Stresses that only a political, inclusive and negotiated solution to the conflict can restore peace and preserve the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen; urges all parties to engage, in good faith and without preconditions, in a new round of UN-led peace negotiations as soon as possible, including by resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations, rejecting acts of violence in pursuit of political goals, and refraining from provocation and all unilateral actions to undermine the political solution; supports the efforts of the UN Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to hold UN-facilitated peace talks in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 2140 (2014) and 2216 (2015);
 10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and the Government of Yemen.
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