

Thursday 15 June 2017

P8_TA(2017)0273

Humanitarian situation in Yemen

European Parliament resolution of 15 June 2017 on the humanitarian situation in Yemen (2017/2727(RSP))

(2018/C 331/20)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Yemen, in particular those of 25 February 2016 ⁽¹⁾ on the humanitarian situation in Yemen and of 9 July 2015 ⁽²⁾ on the situation in Yemen,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 April 2017 on Yemen,
 - having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 8 October 2016 on the attack in Yemen and of 19 October 2016 on the ceasefire in Yemen,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen, in particular Resolutions 2216 (2015), 2201 (2015) and 2140 (2014),
 - having regard to the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen held on 25 April 2017 in Geneva,
 - having regard to the call made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and international sanctions, Idriss Jazairy, on 12 April 2017 for the lifting of the naval blockade on Yemen,
 - having regard to the statements by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, of 10 October 2016 on the outrageous attack on a funeral in Yemen, of 10 February 2017 on civilians in Yemen caught between warring parties, and of 24 March 2017 on over 100 civilians killed in a month, including fishermen and refugees, as the Yemen conflict reaches its two-year mark,
 - having regard to the statements by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, of 21 October and 19 November 2016 and of 30 January 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the humanitarian situation in Yemen is catastrophic; whereas in February 2017 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) declared the situation in Yemen the 'largest food security emergency in the world'; whereas, as of May 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that 17 million people in Yemen required food assistance, with 7 million of that number facing a 'food security emergency'; whereas there are 2,2 million children suffering severe acute malnourishment, with one child dying every ten minutes of preventable causes; whereas there are 2 million internally displaced persons and 1 million returnees;
- B. whereas the consequences of the ongoing conflict are devastating for the country and its population; whereas, in spite of the international calls for a political solution to the crisis, the parties to the conflict have failed to reach a settlement and the fighting continues; whereas neither side has achieved a military victory and is unlikely to do so in the future;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0066.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0270.

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- C. whereas since March 2015 some 10 000 people have been killed and more than 40 000 injured by the violence according to the UN; whereas the fighting, both on the ground and in the air, has made it impossible for UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) field monitors to access the area to verify the number of civilian casualties, meaning that these figures only reflect the deaths and injuries that the OHCHR has managed to corroborate and confirm; whereas Yemen's civilian infrastructure and institutions have been heavily affected by the war and are increasingly unable to deliver basic services; whereas the health system is on the verge of collapse and key frontline medical workers have not been paid in months;
- D. whereas Yemen is experiencing a second outbreak of cholera and acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), which has led to over 100 000 suspected cholera cases and has killed almost 800 people between 27 April and 8 June 2017 across the country;
- E. whereas vulnerable groups, women and children are particularly affected by the ongoing hostilities and the humanitarian crisis, and whereas the safety and well-being of women and girls is of particular concern; whereas children in particular are vulnerable to the rise in violence in Yemen, with 1 540 children killed and 2 450 injured as documented by the UN;
- F. whereas, due to violence, more than 350 000 children were unable to resume their education in the past school year, bringing the total number of out-of-school children in Yemen to over 2 million, according to UNICEF; whereas out-of-school children are at risk of being recruited to fight;
- G. whereas imports account for almost 90 % of the country's staple foods; whereas the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and international sanctions has stressed that the aerial and naval blockade imposed on Yemen by the coalition forces since March 2015 was one of the main causes of the humanitarian catastrophe, while violence within the country and widespread fuel shortages have disrupted internal food distribution networks;
- H. 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;
- I. 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 increasing the number and scale of its terrorist attacks; whereas AQAP and the so-called Islamic State ISIS/Daesh has established its presence in Yemen and has carried out terrorist attacks, killing hundreds of people;
- J. whereas, in its resolution of 25 February 2016, Parliament called for an initiative aimed at imposing an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, in line with Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008;
- K. whereas Houthi and allied forces have both been accused of committing serious laws-of-war violations by laying banned anti-personnel landmines, mistreating detainees and launching indiscriminate rockets into populated areas in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia;
- L. whereas the total amount of EU humanitarian funding to Yemen for 2015 and 2016 came to EUR 120 million; whereas the allocated amount of aid in 2017 is EUR 46 million; whereas despite the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen held in Geneva in April 2017 — during which various countries and organisations made pledges amounting to USD 1,1 billion — as of 9 May 2017 donors had delivered funds amounting to only 28 % of the UN's USD 2,1 billion humanitarian appeal for Yemen for 2017; whereas an additional EUR 70 million is expected to be mobilised in development aid in 2017;

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1. Expresses grave concern at the alarming deterioration in 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, the continuation of airstrikes, ground-level fighting and shelling, despite repeated calls for a renewed cessation of hostilities;
2. 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; urges all parties to seek an immediate ceasefire and to return to the negotiating table; reiterates its support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Yemen;
3. Expresses grave concern that the continuing airstrikes and ground-level fighting have led to thousands of civilian deaths, displacement and a loss of livelihoods putting more lives at risk, 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;
4. Condemns all terror attacks and violence against civilians in the strongest terms, including bombardments, the use of cluster munitions, rocket, shelling, sniper fire and missile attacks and the reported use of anti-personnel mines as well as attacks causing the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including schools, medical facilities, residential areas, markets, water systems, ports and airports;
5. Urges the Government of Yemen to assume its responsibilities in the fight against ISIS/Daesh and AQAP, which are taking advantage of the current instability; recalls that all acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, and regardless of when, where and by whom they are committed; emphasises the need for all parties to the conflict to take resolute action against such groups, whose activities represent a grave threat to a negotiated settlement and the security of the region and beyond;
6. Reiterates its call on all sides and their regional and international backers 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; recalls that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and medical personnel, amounts to a grave violation of international humanitarian law; urges the international community to make provisions for the international criminal prosecution of those responsible for violations of international law committed in Yemen; supports, in this regard, the call by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini, for the establishment of an independent international body to carry out a comprehensive investigation into the crimes committed in the conflict in Yemen; stresses that ensuring accountability for violations is indispensable to achieving a lasting settlement of the conflict;
7. Recalls that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen and that the crisis can only be solved through an inclusive, Yemeni-led negotiation process, involving all the parties concerned, with the full and meaningful participation of women, leading to an inclusive political solution; restates its support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen and the European External Action Service to facilitate a resumption of negotiations, and urges all parties to the conflict to react in a constructive manner and without attaching preconditions to these efforts; emphasises that the implementation of confidence-building measures such as immediate steps towards a sustainable ceasefire, a mechanism for a UN-monitored withdrawal of forces, facilitation of humanitarian and commercial access and the release of political prisoners is essential to facilitating a return to the political track;
8. Urges Saudi Arabia and Iran to work to improve bilateral relations, and to seek to work together to end the fighting in Yemen;
9. Supports the EU's call on all parties to the conflict to take all necessary steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, in situations of armed conflict; strongly condemns the violations of the rights of the child and is concerned at children's limited access to even basic healthcare and education; condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers in hostilities; calls for the EU and the international community to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of demobilised children into the community;

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10. Calls on all parties to the conflict to work to remove all logistical and financial obstacles affecting the import and distribution of food and medical supplies to civilians in need; urges, in particular, the parties to ensure the full and effective functioning of major commercial entry points, such as the ports of Hodeida and Aden; stresses their importance as a lifeline for humanitarian support and essential supplies; calls for a reopening of Sana'a airport for commercial flights so that urgently needed medicine and commodities can be flown in and Yemenis in need of medical treatment can be flown out;
 11. Calls on the Council to effectively promote compliance with international humanitarian law, as provided for in the relevant EU guidelines; reiterates, in particular, the need for the strict application by all EU Member States of the rules laid down in Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on arms exports; recalls, in this regard, its resolution of 25 February 2016;
 12. Stresses the importance of empowering local authorities and building their capacity in service delivery, as well as engaging the Yemeni diaspora and international NGOs in supporting critical service sectors; underlines, in particular, the urgent need for the EU and other international actors to address the cholera outbreak and support the health system in order to prevent its collapse, including facilitating supplies and salary payments for frontline medical workers who are critical to the humanitarian response;
 13. Welcomes the fact that the EU and its Member States are ready to step up humanitarian assistance to the population across the country to respond to the rising needs and to mobilise their development assistance to fund projects in crucial sectors; welcomes the commitments made at the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen and stresses the need for coordinated humanitarian action under UN leadership to ease the suffering of the people of Yemen; further urges all countries to fulfil the commitments made at the pledging event in order to contribute to addressing humanitarian needs;
 14. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to urgently propose an integrated EU strategy for Yemen and to make a renewed push for a Yemeni peace initiative under the auspices of the UN; calls in this regard for the appointment of an EU special representative for Yemen;
 15. 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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