

Yemen Cholera Worst on Record and Numbers Still Rising

By [Oxfam International](#)

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Massive aid effort and cease-fire needed as rainy season approaches.

The number of people with cholera in Yemen is now the largest ever recorded in any country in a single year, Oxfam said today. At over 360,000 suspected cholera cases in just three months since the outbreak started, it is now already the largest number of cases in a year, topping the previous annual record of 340,311 in Haiti in 2011.

Though there are signs that the increase in numbers is slowing, the country's rainy season from July to September will increase the risk of the disease spreading further. It is feared that the total number of people infected could eventually rise to over 600,000, making it one of the largest outbreak since records began in 1949.

Almost 2,000 people in Yemen have died from suspected cholera since late April this year and many more are now at risk, weakened by hunger, disease and the ongoing war.

Nigel Timmins, Oxfam's Humanitarian Director who has just returned back from a fact finding mission to Yemen, said:

"It is quite frankly staggering that in just three months more people in Yemen have contracted cholera than any country has suffered in a single year since modern records began. Cholera has spread unchecked in a country already on its knees after two years of war and which is teetering on the brink of famine. For many people, weakened by war and hunger, cholera is the knockout blow.

"This is a massive crisis needing a massive response - if anything the numbers we have are likely to underestimate the scale of the crisis. So far funding from government donors to pay for the aid effort has been lacklustre at best, less than half is what is needed.

"Cholera is easy to treat and simple to prevent. We need a massive well coordinated effort to get clean water and decent sanitation to people and simple things like soap to keep them safe from disease. We need an end to country entry restrictions of supplies and people so that we can get on with the job.

"The war has destroyed the economy and left millions without jobs or the means to earn a living and forced 3 million people to flee their homes. It has precipitated a crisis which has left 7 million people on the brink of starvation. And the war has destroyed or damaged more than half the country's health facilities and ushered in one of the world's worst cholera outbreaks in over 50

years.

“Vital public servants such as health workers have not been paid for nearly a year. Hospitals, ports, roads and bridges have been bombed. All this is crippling efforts to tackle the cholera crisis.

“Those countries providing the arms and military support, such as the US and the UK, are fuelling a war that is causing wide-spread suffering and tipping a whole nation towards a catastrophe. It is hard to imagine how much more Yemen can take before it collapses entirely.”

War has had a devastating effect on Yemen’s people and its infrastructure – almost 5,000 civilians have been killed in the fighting and parts of the country stand on the brink of famine. Health, water and sanitation systems have been bombed to the point of collapse leaving over 15 million people without adequate access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation. Millions more are hungry and need help in getting a decent meal.

Waste is piling up on the streets and in the settlements of displaced people because sanitation services, severely damaged by the two year war, cannot cope. Aid agencies tackling the cholera crisis are in danger of being overwhelmed by the scale of the outbreak.

Meanwhile, the world’s major arms exporters – which include the UK and US – are making more money from arming the Saudi led coalition force than they are spending on Yemen’s humanitarian appeal. In 2016, Saudi Arabia spent nearly \$3 billion on arms from the world’s major arms exporters. As of this month, many of those same governments had given just \$620 million toward the \$2.1 billion UN appeal for Yemen.

Oxfam is calling for an immediate cease-fire to enable a nationwide cholera campaign to tackle the disease unhindered by fighting and allow people to get their lives back together. It is calling for the opening of ports and Sanaa airport to allow a massive injection of aid and for the UN and aid agencies’ appeal to be fully funded.

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