



**Statement of Ranking Member Joe Wilson (R-SC)  
Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

*“The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen: Addressing Current Political and Humanitarian Challenges”*  
March 6, 2019

Remarks as Prepared

Chairman Deutch, first of all congratulations on assuming the chairmanship of this important subcommittee. Your leadership on U.S. policy issues in the Middle East is well known, and I look forward to working closely with you and your staff moving forward.

Secondly, I'd like to thank you for calling this important hearing. The ongoing conflict in Yemen has produced the most devastating humanitarian catastrophe in the world. You have gone over some of the statistics in your opening statement. The numbers are sickening.

Close to 80% of Yemen's population of nearly 30 million people are currently in need of some form of assistance. That is a staggering 22 million people. 16 million Yemenis lack access to drinking water and sanitation. Another 16 million are classified as severely food insecure.

Unfortunately, children have borne the brunt of this humanitarian nightmare. The regional director for the United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) remarked just last week that “Today Yemen is the worst place on earth for a child.”

Nearly 85,000 children have died from severe acute malnutrition between April 2015 and the end of last year. About 360,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition with life threatening consequences. Cholera has resurfaced in Yemen, with roughly 10,000 suspected



cases now reported per week according to the World Health Organization. Tragically, children account for about 30 percent of infections.

Amid the conflict and humanitarian crisis, Yemen's economy continues to unravel. The exchange rate is about 600 Yemeni rials to the US dollar. As the economic situation gets increasingly worse, the price of food for Yemenis rises, exacerbating the situation on the ground.

We were optimistic that the UN-brokered Stockholm Agreement signed in December 2018 could alleviate some of the humanitarian concerns. But little progress has been achieved since the parties met in Sweden, and violations of the agreement and resulting cease fire continue unabated.

I am saddened by reports that the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have been targeting and detaining humanitarian workers in the country. International aid is a lifeline to millions of Yemenis, and humanitarian workers should have unhindered and unimpeded access to civilians in war zones. Everyone should condemn harassment and intimidation of these good people risking their lives to help others.

But fundamentally, I agree with UN Secretary General Guterres comments last week when he said that "There cannot be a humanitarian solution to humanitarian problems." Only a comprehensive political solution to the conflict can begin to address Yemen's immense problems. Throwing money at the many problems facing Yemen will not fix the country.



I appreciate Chairman Deutch calling this hearing and shedding some light on the tragic humanitarian conditions on the ground currently Yemen. Too often we focus exclusively on our nation's more direct security concerns in Yemen – whether it be al-Qaeda's local branch or the increasing influence of Iran.

The truth, however, is that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is laying the groundwork for future decades of instability in the country that will inevitably be a breeding ground for the terrorists to attack the United States. This is the long-term threat to our national security interests that must be addressed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward from hearing from our esteemed witnesses.

###