

UN agency warns of another possible Yemen cholera outbreak

August 1 2018, by Ahmed Al-Haj

The U.N. children's agency warned Wednesday of the potential for another cholera outbreak in war-torn Yemen after airstrikes hit water facilities and other civilian infrastructure in the port city of Hodeida.

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said in a statement the airstrikes earlier this week damaged a sanitation facility and a station that supplies most of the city's water.

Impoverished Yemen has been devastated by a stalemated three-year civil war that has left around two-thirds of Yemen's population of 27 million relying on aid, and over 8 million at risk of starving.

"Two days ago, we received reports that a UNICEF-supported warehouse containing humanitarian provisions, including hygiene and water-related supplies, was hit by two airstrikes," Fore said.

She said a UNICEF-supported sanitation center in the district of Zabid in Hodeida came under attack on July 28, damaging the facility's fuel tank. A day earlier, she said, the water station in the district of al-Mina, which provides Hodeida with most of its water, was hit.

"Attacks on water infrastructure jeopardize efforts to prevent another outbreak of cholera and acute watery diarrhea in Yemen," Fore said.

A previous cholera outbreak, which began in in October 2016 and escalated in April 2017, has killed more than 2,000 people, according to

the Red Cross.

Yemeni government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, have been advancing in Hodeida province in recent weeks as they battle Iran-allied rebels known as Houthis. They are trying to retake the port city of Hodeida, the main entry point for food in a country teetering on the brink of famine.

Meanwhile, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi arrived Wednesday in the country's easternmost province of al-Mahra to try to calm protests against the coalition, Yemeni officials said.

The officials said dozens of people have been protesting for days in al-Ghaydah, the main city in the province, against the presence of troops from Saudi Arabia.

The protesters want the troops to leave the city and hand control of the al-Ghaydah airport and the border crossing with Oman to civil authorities in al-Mahra, activist Mohamed Amin, 38, said.

Yemen's official news agency SABA said Hadi and Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed Al Jaber also kicked off the rebuilding of the airport as well as the Nashton port in al-Mahra.

But Amin, the activist, said such moves do not meet the protesters' demands. "We want all security and civil institutions to be under control of al-Mahra people," he said.

In the northern province of Saada, Yemeni security officials said a roadside bombing killed a cameraman, Issa el-Nami, while he was covering heavy fighting between government forces and the rebels.

The officials said government forces backed by airstrikes from the Saudi-

led coalition have been advancing in the area of Bakem in Saada in the past days. They said the fighting killed more than 150 people from both sides in the past four days.

The Yemeni officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media.

The Houthis seized control of Sanaa in September 2014, and later pushed south toward the port city of Aden. The Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict in March 2015 and has faced criticism for a campaign of airstrikes that has killed civilians and destroyed hospitals and markets.

The Houthis, meanwhile, have laid land mines, killing and wounding civilians. They have also targeted religious minorities and imprisoned opponents. The stalemated war has killed more than 10,000 people.

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