

Yemen Runs Out of Fuel and Last Hospitals Close

By Randi Nord

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Sana'a (GPA) – While the mainstream media focuses on condemning President Trump for pulling US troops out of Syria, Yemen faces a national health crisis. The last functioning hospitals across multiple major cities in Yemen will shut their doors and stop providing services to patients. Geopolitics Alert spoke with Yemen's Ministry of Health spokesman Yousuf Al-Haidari to discuss the repercussions of this crisis.

Yemen has completely run out of fuel.

Imagine how communities across the United States would screech to a halt if gas stations simply ran dry one day. People couldn't drive to work. Families couldn't cook food. Homes wouldn't have hot water to clean or bathe.

For a country living under siege like Yemen, lack of gas also means that hospitals must close. Most hospitals have reduced their working hours and the rest are preparing to close entirely.

“There are hundreds of thousands of patients, if not millions, who will die quickly and slowly, they will die in pain. Who will provide oil to millions of Yemenis who need transportation to reach these hospitals? Who will provide transportation for the 6,000 kidney failure patients to the health center twice a week? Who will provide fuel to the private sector, which provides treatment services to about 60% of the population?” Health Ministry spokesman Dr. Yousuf Al-Haidari told Geopolitics Alert.

The poorest communities living in Yemen's rural areas, like

Hodeidah, are most at risk because they cannot afford transportation to functioning hospitals five-hours away in Sana'a.

Hospitals close in Yemen and the media remains silent
Dr. Yousuf Al-Haidari explained that while 50% of the healthcare sector operates in a country running on simple health infrastructure, the number of people in need of health services after the aggression and siege has multiplied five times over.

Here's what the current crisis looks like in practical terms:

120 government hospitals and 255 private hospitals

3000 government health centers, 900 private

More than 5000 pharmacies, public and private

Hundreds of laboratories

27 dialysis centers

3 cancer treatment centers

Al-Haidari highlighted the already devastating health crises facing his country:

More than 50,000 total citizens wounded – including men, women, and children – due to the coalition military attacks. The number of malnourished children (under five) has risen to 2,200,000 out of 5,000,000 children – or 44% – 500,000 of whom are severely malnourished.

1.1 million women of child-bearing age are malnourished which affects their children and future pregnancies.

A woman dies every two hours due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

UN reports and MoH reports also say that a Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes from malnutrition or a deadly disease.

48,000 health workers' salaries have been cut off for 40 months due to the relocation of the Central Bank of Yemen from the capital Sanaa to the city of Aden, under the Saudi-Emirati occupation.

Weaponizing disease

Not only has the Saudi coalition continued its aggression, but it's also tightened the noose on Yemen's aid and healthcare in an attempt to strangle Yemen's most vulnerable civilians to death. Cancer patients, kidney patients, pregnant women, children, and the elderly face the worst consequences.

Many people may not realize how a fuel shortage and blockade affects every aspect of Yemeni healthcare.

95% of the medical devices in Yemeni government hospitals are out of their validity period but doctors must work with them because there is no alternative. Patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes (500k patients), heart disease, kidney failure (6000), kidney transplants (3000), cancer (60k), and other chronic diseases cannot access their medicines due to the high price in the commercial market. The government isn't able to offer a free or affordable alternative due to the blockade.

MoH spokesman al-Haidari said that dozens of people die from a lack of access to vital medicine every day.

Epidemics have spread again, which disappeared in Yemen decades ago, due to the destruction of Yemeni infrastructure, whether in water or sanitation. As part of the cholera epidemic, 2,099,531 people were infected as of October 5, 2019.

Al-Haidari highlighted that the blockade, deteriorating healthcare system, and poor sanitation has caused medieval diseases to return in Yemen with devastating consequences:

"Another 3,662 never arrived by ambulance to hospitals because of the poor economic conditions, the destruction of roads, and fear of warplanes targeting them and other reasons. This is a catastrophic figure in one epidemic and in the 21st century!"

It's common for Riyadh to carry out "double-tap" airstrikes that target ambulances, media crews, and EMTs following an

initial airstrike on a civilian home or gathering. Last summer, warplanes struck a crowded fish market in Hodeidah and subsequently bombed the entrance to the hospital, killing 55 and injuring over 130.

Compounding the cholera issue, a diphtheria epidemic has also surged with 4,244 infected and 233 killed as of September 2019 – 79% of which were children under 14. Furthermore, H1N1 flu, malaria, dengue fever, measles, and many other epidemics have spread and killed thousands of Yemenis.

Another 42,000 Yemenis died due to the closure of Sanaa airport, which was closed on August 8, 2016 and is still closed today.

“More than 200,000 patients need to travel abroad for treatment and cannot because of the closure. We lose about 30-50 patients daily,” he said.

Why do Yemeni hospitals need gas?

Only 40% of Yemen had access to electricity prior to the war. During the course of the nearly five-year aggression, US-backed Saudi coalition warplanes have bombed vital power stations and equipment that major cities needed to supply power. Most hospitals, factories, hotels, large buildings, and industrial operations all relied on backup gas-powered generators to supply electricity even before the war began.

Many Yemeni homes and communities throughout the capital Sana'a have shifted to solar power to break their reliance on gas. However, it's not uncommon for the Saudi coalition to target community solar stations as well. While solar power may fill the gap for homes, hospitals and large operations still require gas power.

Yemen is an oil-producing country and home to more than 3 billion barrels of crude oil reserves but the United States and the United Arab Emirates currently occupy Yemen's major oil fields and export the product.

As a result, Yemenis must import fuel and rely on aid to survive.

The US-Saudi coalition is arbitrarily detaining fuel ships to create a crisis

The unlawful US-backed Saudi-imposed land, sea, and air blockade restricts all imports to Yemen. Before ships dock at Hodeidah port to distribute aid, they must first dock in Djibouti where both the Saudis and UN inspect the ships for weapons and missile supplies.

The process takes weeks and food often rots in the hot African sun before it even makes it to Yemen.

Last month, Sana'a officials and local NGOs revealed that the Saudi coalition had arbitrarily detained at least 13 ships filled with food, fuel, and medical supplies. These ships had already passed inspection in a neighboring port yet Saudi authorities refused to allow the ships to dock and unload in Yemen's Hodeidah port.

Riyadh's actions detaining the ships are a blatant violation of the Stockholm Agreement from December 2018 where Yemen's Sana'a government and members of the Saudi coalition worked out a partial peace deal. While Yemen's Ansarullah held up their end of the bargain (which included handing over control of Hodeidah port to international observers), the Saudi coalition immediately violated the agreement with airstrikes and military bombardment and continues to do so.

Mohammed Al-Houthi of Sana'a's Supreme Revolutionary Committee said in a Tweet that the ship detentions prove that the coalition is not interested in peace.

"The escalation of the blockade by detaining ships does not represent positive intentions and does not imply a practical orientation towards peace. The world should realize that exacerbating the humanitarian situation through increasing the blockade is nothing but a catastrophe. Yemen is known to be

undergoing the worst humanitarian crisis created by the aggression. We hope to take the matter very seriously as it is purely a humanitarian issue.”

No media coverage for catastrophe in Yemen

Remember the surge of coverage about the so-called “last hospital in Aleppo?” Unsurprisingly, those same journalists are nowhere to be found now that Yemen’s healthcare system is legitimately collapsing due to the actions of Washington, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi.

A quick Google search shows that on the contrary, promoted articles written by Saudi coalition media outlets actually highlight Saudi “aid” to Yemen.