

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Hunger, Mangelernährung und Angst vor Cholera

- CEO Helle Thorning-Schmidt warnt nach Jemen-Reise: Lage dramatisch
- Belagerung des Hafens Hodeidah hätte verheerende Konsequenzen
- Trinkwasserversorgung gefährdet

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A siege of Hodeidah could have devastating consequences, warns Save the Children's global CEO Helle Thorning-Schmidt after returning from Yemen

Malnutrition and risk of a severe cholera outbreak could endanger the lives of thousands

Multimedia content from Helle's trip to Yemen available [here](#)



Save the Children International CEO, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, with 8-month-old Lina who is suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and her mother Kawthar* in Amran, Yemen*

Berlin, July 26 2018. Yemen could be on the brink of a deadly new cholera epidemic that could affect thousands of people in the coming weeks unless urgent action is taken, Save the Children is warning.

The charity is becoming increasingly concerned that Hodeidah City could be besieged as the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition makes advances in northern Yemen and continues to consolidate gains around the south of the city. This could potentially cut off Hodeidah City, its port and its people from the rest of the country.

Conditions are ideal for cholera to spread rapidly in the hot summer months, with almost [3,000 suspected cases](#) reported in the first week of July across the country – the highest number seen since the start of the year.

Hodeidah – the latest flashpoint in a three-year conflict – could become ground zero for a new outbreak of the highly contagious disease. Should the port city become besieged it would be devastating for an estimated 350,000 people who have not yet fled. Many of them are likely to be extremely vulnerable children, elderly, or those who either can't afford to or are physically unable to leave.

Clean drinking water in Hodeidah was already scarce, but supplies have been further ravaged since the offensive by the Saudi- and Emirati-led Coalition to capture the province began in June. Fighting by all parties has badly damaged water and sewerage pipes. Shelling and bombing have also hit water treatment plants and pipes.

In the al-Mighlaf district of Hodeidah the number of new cholera cases increased by more than 110 percent between mid-May and mid-June. The district lies just north of Hodeidah port, through which 80 percent of all of Yemen's supplies enter.

Even a small uptick in cases in Hodeidah poses a grave risk to other parts of Yemen. More than [245,000](#) people have already fled the governorate to neighbouring areas, with some escaping to makeshift camps that have no sanitation and no running water – conditions that could lead to a cholera outbreak.

Save the Children International's CEO Helle Thorning-Schmidt has recently returned from Yemen, where she saw first-hand the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in the country.

"Cholera could spread like wildfire in Yemen, potentially infecting thousands of children and completely overwhelming an already crippled health system. Many hospitals have been reduced to rubble, and those that are still standing are barely functioning. Doctors have not been paid, pharmacies are understocked, and power cuts happen constantly." said Thorning-Schmidt.

"So many parents I met were struggling to keep their children alive after three years of war. Food and aid have been used as weapons of war and children are paying the price. They are severely malnourished and don't have access to basic supplies like food, clean drinking water and medicine. This leaves them extremely vulnerable to diseases like cholera, which many are too weak to fight off. If people are forced to flee fighting on top of this, many children just won't stand a chance."

Undernourished children are far more likely to contract cholera. The disease causes violent vomiting and diarrhoea and is especially deadly for children under five years and those whose immune systems have been badly compromised by malnutrition.

Hodeidah was a hotspot of last year's cholera outbreak, with nearly [164,000 suspected cases](#) out of more than one million reported nationwide. More than [2,300](#) people, many of them children, died in that epidemic, which started in April 2017.

Dr Mariam Aldogani, a Save the Children doctor in Hodeidah, said:

"We're terrified of another outbreak as the number of cholera cases is increasing day-by-day. Just six weeks ago we were going to close many of our cholera treatment centres but owing to the surge of cases we have to keep them open. Current conditions mean that it could be difficult to keep the number of cases under control. Water chlorination isn't a durable solution, the summer heat is relentless, there's rubbish lining the streets and the health system is bursting at the seams."

A Save the Children health worker in Hodeidah, said:

"The number of suspected cholera cases in the health facility where I work has increased significantly over the past two months. Some of the people who arrive at the health centre suffering from suspected cholera are from the same family which isn't a good sign. It means cholera is spreading quickly through families and communities and we urgently need to confront it and help vulnerable people who don't even have enough money to pay for the bus fare to hospital."

The war in Yemen is now in its fourth year and has left 11.3 million children in need of humanitarian assistance. Schools and hospitals have been caught in the crossfire and fighting has prevented access to food, fuel, clean water and medical supplies. Nearly 8 million children are now going hungry every day and almost a third of under-fives are acutely malnourished. With 40% of the population aged under 15, this is truly a children's emergency. More than 80% of people rely on aid agencies for essentials such as food and healthcare.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt continued:

"Three years of war have created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, and the tragedy of Yemen is that this crisis is entirely man-made. Children's suffering is the direct result of the tactics and actions

of all parties to the conflict, and it can end. We need to see an urgent stop to the fighting and a political solution to the conflict. We call on all parties to the conflict to engage in good faith with the UN Special Envoy, commit to a ceasefire and bring about a peaceful end to this war.

“All sides must allow aid agencies like ours to have full, unimpeded humanitarian access to save lives. The international community must also step up its support for health and sanitation so that we can prevent another outbreak of this merciless disease.”

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****NOTES TO EDITORS****

- From [WHO](#): a number of districts in Hodeidah are reporting the highest number of cases of suspected cholera, as well as the highest severe acute and chronic malnutrition rates in the country
- “Of all the things we are worried about, cholera is top of the list,” [UN OCHA](#) said on June 21.
- Since the beginning of 2018, Hodeidah reported 16% of the total suspected cholera cases nationwide with a total number of 14,910.
- Children under 5 account for 29% of all suspected cholera cases.

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