



# Yemen



## Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 175,000
Percentage of total population	At least 0.7%
Start of current displacement situation	2004
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	175,000 (2009)
New displacement	150,000
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict, human rights violations
Human development index	140

As of December 2009, at least 175,000 people were forcibly displaced by conflicts within Yemen. In recent years the government has faced intermittent internal armed conflict in Sa'ada Governorate in northern Yemen, a growing southern separatist movement, and a resurgence of terrorist groups including al-Qaida. In Sa'ada, a group referred to as "al-Houthi" after the family name of the leader of the rebellion, had since early 2004 engaged in an armed conflict with the Yemeni army and government-backed tribes. The conflict began with isolated clashes in Sa'ada but by late 2009 the conflict also affected the governorates of Al Jawf, Hajjah, and Amran, and bordering areas of Saudi Arabia. There had been six rounds of conflict since 2004, with the latest beginning in August 2009. The intensity and geographical spread of the conflict increased in each round and all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi army, had reportedly perpetrated violations of humanitarian and human rights law.

In addition to the people reportedly displaced in northern Yemen, more than 800,000 people in Sa'ada and neighbouring governorates were affected by the conflict. In Saudi Arabia, inhabitants of villages bordering Yemen were forcibly displaced to provisional camps but no clear estimate was available of their number or situation. Limited and sporadic access severely hampered needs assessments and prevented much humanitarian activity, especially in the governorates of Sa'ada, Al Jawf, and Amran. Difficulties in identifying appropriate sites to establish organised IDP sites led to the establishment of informal camps. However, as of late 2009, the camps only provided shelter for around one in eight IDPs, with most of the rest seeking shelter with hosts in governorates as far south as Sana'a.

At the height of the preceding round of fighting in 2008, 130,000 people had reportedly been internally displaced in a conflict involving indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and alleged child recruitment by all parties. In July 2009, the UN estimated that 100,000 people were still displaced or affected, but it lacked the access to verify this number. Damage to homes, continuing insecurity, the fear of reprisals and the lack of livelihood opportunities and basic services in return areas all added to IDPs' vulnerability and barred their return. Exposure to violence had led to high rates of trauma and anxiety, particularly among women and children, and child labour was

increasingly witnessed among vulnerable households in IDP camps and host communities. Intermittent violence in Sa'ada from late 2008 to mid-2009 led to further displacement, while tribal, government and Houthi checkpoints progressively reduced people's freedom of movement.

With the escalation of the conflict in August 2009, IDPs and communities hosting them faced increasingly severe protection concerns, particularly the estimated 90,000 IDPs in Sa'ada governorate, where the fighting was most intense. Attacks on civilians including those fleeing the conflict were more frequently reported than in previous rounds of conflict, and many communities were trapped in areas where heavy fighting took place. Hundreds of people who sought refuge into neighbouring Saudi Arabia were subsequently refouled back to Yemen.

Needs assessments in accessible areas in late 2009 revealed IDPs living in open shelters, or in overcrowded housing, schools and clinics; they underlined the vulnerability of single mothers and girls, the rising rates of domestic violence, the lack of assistance reaching people with special needs, and also incidents of conflict between IDPs and host communities. The assessments also revealed that access to clean water, sanitation, and food and non-food supplies was inadequate and becoming more difficult.

The humanitarian response in Yemen was impeded by restrictions on the access of agencies, limited resources and inadequate funding. The government recognised the situation of displacement and established mechanisms to coordinate with the humanitarian community to address the situation of conflict-affected populations. The government also gradually conceded wider access to areas of displacement but this remained limited, as did its response to the situation of IDPs.

In December 2009, the UN launched its first consolidated appeal in response to the situation in northern Yemen, following the urgent appeal launched in August. The cluster approach was implemented, with UNHCR as protection cluster lead. Several international agencies, and national agencies such as the Yemeni Red Crescent Society, Al Amal and the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, were at the end of the year providing assistance to conflict-affected and displaced communities.